

SHIFTING GEARS

THE CHANGING MEANING OF WORK IN MASSACHUSETTS, 1920-1980

GARDNER, MASSACHUSETTS

INTERVIEWEE: Joe Bogdanski

INTERVIEWER: Martha Norkunas

DATE: February 29, 1988

TRANSCRIBER: Lynda Luden

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MN: One more time, Today is February 29th, 1988, and I'm here with Joe Bogdanski (spells the name). Probably _____(unintelligible) things I'm going to ask you.

JB: Well, go ahead, ask 'em.

MN: So I'm going to _____(unintelligible) again, do you mind?

JB: Huh?

MN: Do you mind if I ask you the same questions?

JB: No, I don't mind nothing, because there's nothing secret.

MN: All right. I want to take you back to the beginning of who came from Poland.

JB: The people that came to Gardner--

MN: In your family.

JB: Huh?

MN: In your family.

JB: Oh, in my family. My family came in 19-, my father came in 1903, my mother came in in 1905, but they didn't come over here to Gardner, they came in to Stafford Spring, Connecticut. And then, everybody at that time, used to go where labor was, where you could get a job. And my father and my mother got

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married in 1905.

MN: In Connecticut?

JB: No, in our town of Otter River. That, I have picked up their record in the St. Martins Church in Otter River in 1905.

MN: Where's that? ~~hIs~~ that in Massachusetts?

JB: That's, of course it's in Massachusetts. It's the next town to Gardner.

MN: Well, if you grow up - I went to Bedford High School and we never went west of 495.

JB: Well, that's true, that was the woods, then. But anyhow, they came over, over here and they were married in 1905.

MN: Why did they come here?

JB: Why, really and truly, if you look at their passport, it says they are, they were born in Russia, but that, nobody believes it because they always say they were born in Poland, but they were ruled by the Russions. And another thing, you did not, you couldn't read, you didn't read because they didn't let you read. You didn't go to church because, I don't know how much persecution they had on the religious, religious side, but they used to read the catechism, and this is the way my mother has learned how to read, reading the catechism in Polish. In fact, she taught herself how to read the newspaper. Except my father got naturalized in 19-, oh it'd be, maybe 1923 or 28, one of these dates, he went to night school, they used to have these night school classes for all the foreigners, well,

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you know, not only the Poles but everybody.

MN: In Gardner?

JB: In Gardner. Yeah, and there was a teacher, in fact, I remember her, Cora Laney, but I can't place the year that she was the main, well, instigator of this, people to go to school. Now here comes where the Polish Club comes into being. Where the people came into, now we're talking about coming into Gardner. See, my mother and father one day, now they got married in Otter River, there was a factory out to Hubbardston used to make horse blankets. And this is where my father and my mother located. That's where I became. That's where I was born. I was personally born in Hubbardston.

MN: They were working at the factory that made horse blankets?

JB: Well, yeah, that, that's what it was. And that's, they used to make horse blankets because that's what it was. I don't know what they used it for, but must, the only thing I can ever remember is, always saying, folks used to get together, well, how is the horse blanket shop? That's what they used to tell my father, how is the horse blanket? But they had other blankets, they always says, these were the horse blankets. So that's many years ago, but then, I never asked them so many questions that I'm sorry I never did learn, the whole story of them.. The only thing is I know that they came at the start of spring, they came into Ellis Island. My mother came in when she was only 16 years old, I think, in fact, she falsified her age, that's because I don't think they could have came in here at 16 years

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of age. But they came in--

MN: Did she know your father?

JB: Nope. She never knew, never knew my father.

MN: She came alone?

JB: She came alone. This, her maiden name was Pioskie, Pioskie, (spelling) and he sent the money for her to come in, and you know, that was in steerage. Where they were down in the bottom of the deck, where they were maybe piled three high. Had bunks.

MN: Did she tell you about it?

JB: Well, she told me this, she says it was so terrible, and she says she was always sick, everybody was always sick down there. But that was, that was the way they came to the Ellis Island, but you got to remember, this was in 1905, too.

MN: And you said your father sent for your mother?

JB: No.

MN: Oh, oh, Who sent her the money?

JB: A relative. Her maiden name is _____, if you want to spell it, it's P-i-a-s-c-i-k. Piascik. Piascik.

MN: Uh, huh.

JB: And, John I think was his name, then he sent for her. And--

MN: And he was her uncle or something?

JB: Well, don't ask me, because I, I won't be able to tell you. Really and truly.

MN: Was she coming from a farm? Were your father--

JB: They're all farmers. Actually, I think they were serfs,

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because they always used to say that they would work on this big estate, and sometimes they would run horses and chase the rabbits or foxes or whatever, they says they used to run through the wheat fields over there, they were so mad, but you couldn't do nothing because they worked for this master. They were really serfs, I, I, believe it, that they were really, truly serfs. At that time, because anything was better than what they had. They had no freedom. Well, they could talk Polish. But churches, I think, were sorta restricted and really I couldn't say that for sure, but the lang-, to teach, to read, to study, they didn't have no schooling, so when they came over here--

MN: What part of Poland, do you know?

JB: Uh, now, one of them, W_____ would be, I don't know if W_____ is the county, or the state, and my father came from V_____, that's, was on the Russian side over there, but I think Ukrania is close, if there's a division line, there's, like _____(unintelligible), from Polish, Lithuania, and Poland. When the wars are over, Poland was next, _____(unintelligible) or something like that, say you're Polish. But, I never did, I never dawned on me to ask them all these things and I don't think they would have known, anyhow, because they were just plain old dirt farmers, that's all they ever knew was the dirt farmers.

MN: Well, what's interesting now is what people do remember. It's not that you remember everything but what's interesting to me is, you know, what was important enough that they should have

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told you.

JB: Well, see, I don't know how they ever came to baptize me in the St. Joseph's Church in Gardner. Sometimes, when I think of it, that's where the Polish Church came into being, was in 1913, that's when I was born. But I say, how did they bring me? In a horse and team? I was born on the 4th and they baptized me, the records show I was baptized on the 8th, I was 4 days old, they brought me from Hubbardston on the, it's on the Worchester road, now the, I used to, when my son was started growing up, I said, "This is where I was born." And every time we used to go down the hill, he says, "Hey, Ma. This is Daddy is born."

MN: Oh!

JB: So we used to go over there, that was on the corner of the old road that's no longer there. The factory is all destroyed because it's, well, it's built in and there's a cemetery further on. But when you go down Worchester Rd., go down the hill, there's a, there's a place, what is it, Curtis's Saw Mill, that there is a road over there, and that old road, if you look down it, if you look, there's a kind of a indentation over there, and that's where the old house stood. And now there's a tree that you can't put your arms around, that's so many years ago, but the house is gone.

MN: And how did they come to move from Hubbardston to Gardner then?

JB: Well, first we moved to Otter River.

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MN: After Hubbardston?

JB: After Hubbardston. Now this, we moved on Liberty St., now here comes why, my mother's sister lived there, both on the same street. My father's sister came in on the next house. Well, see, when, if one came home, I mean, If one came into an area, and the sister was someplace, in Poland or some other place, you know what they done? Come. Come here, even if they lived in the same house. But just come. My father lived, when he first came over here, he lived in Baldwinville, and there's this story that's, when my father _____

(unintelligible), spending a lot of money and this person that my father knew very well, he came over, he says, "Hey Stanley, I understand that you're having a kind of a hard time." My father says, "Hard time? Oh, no," he says, "I don't know." "Well, " he says, "I heard," he says, "if you can use \$500, " he says, "I'll give you \$500." That's what _____ (unintelligible), comrades, you became.

MN: Would he pay him back?

JB: He didn't, I didn't either. Because I bought the farm except when we had a party I'd have a little bit more than I should have, and start talking about so many bills would come in. But then when we lost the farm, I showed him all the things, and then he says, "I'm going to build the house over there." He says, "Oh." And we did.

MN: That was your father?

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JB: No, this man that came from Baldwinville, that's how my father came to Baldwinville.

MN: Baldwinville?

JB: Baldwinville, B-a-, Baldnwinville, not sville, because Baldwinsville is another place in Massachusetts. But this is Baldwinville, it's only about 5, 7, maybe 7 miles, it's in a, town is Baldwinville but it's another Templeton. Templeton is divided in Otter River, Baldwinville, East Templeton and Templeton, and they all come under Templeton.

MN: So your parents went from Hubbardston, to Otter River.

JB: From Otter River, now, this is I can, this is what I can remember. We had the, well, like I say, my father worked in the shop in East Templeton--

MN: What kind of shop?

JB: --and he use to take a trolley car. Well, it's a furniture, carriage shop, that, CVC, there used to be a, see, I can't even remember the name of it no more, CVC, and then there used to be a shop, I think it was _____ union, too.

MN: Sorry?

JB: Headstrom Union (???). Well, they had, this was a big shop and CVC was one part of the shop, Headstrom Union was another part of the shop, so **when, when you** looked at it, the shop was a big shop until the hurricane of 1938 came and broke up part of the shop and _____ (unintelligible). My father used to come down on a trolley car, but he used to walk to work from there. And then when we, well, I was about in the fourth grade, so that has to be about 9 years old.

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We decided to come to Gardner. My father bought a piece of land on _____Place, and bought it from, well, now, see can remember more, because he bought it from Nelson, person by the name of Nelson. And my father bought this land, and he had a contractor by the name of _____who was a contractor at that time, this is in 1923, and we moved in in 1924, why I say that, because when the, I used to be on the board of registrars for the city of Gardner. I was appointed by _____(unintelligible), Fred Perry. Used to call him Poop Perry, that's an awful name to do, but that's what we used to call him, Poop Perry. He appointed me then, and we used to work at nights. One day I decided, I'm going to find out for sure, sure enough, I took out 1924 book and there it was. My mother and my father were registered at 45 Greenwood Place and that's, I know that's, that's the year that the census has been listed on that street, and I've been on that street up to this day.

MN: The same place that they bought in '24?

JB: Oh, no, I said I bought a farm in the city limits, well, _____Street is here and after that I owned 12 acres in the city limits. Waterford St. extension, they made that road, coming into Greenwood Place. I built my house, the first house over there and I built myself a retirement house in the same place.

MN: So when your parents came here, did they make a farm

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on Greenwood Street?

JB: My father, it was only a 100 foot lot, 10,000 square feet on that plot of land. My father built the house, well, he didn't built it, he had a contractor build it, and it was in 1923 and we moved in here 1924 because the city records show that we all ready lived in 1924 on 45 Greenwood Place. And then when I wanted to farm, my wife wanted a house. And it's a funny thing, how I used to, if you sat on the toilet you could look out the window and see, I'm going to buy that place. It was a man by the name of Ike Howe. Ike Howe was a well respected man, he was director of three banks, he was a well-to-do man, he had a grain store. I raised turkeys at that time, but that was before that, and I used to sit there and tell my wife, I want to buy, so my wife and I, well, after I was married, then we had two children, two girls, and I says, "well, I want to farm." "No," she says, "I want a house." Well, some way we did go looking for houses. We went up where the Narragansett School is built today. You know, that's the school in Baldwinville. There was 97 acres. We almost bought that land, that was an auction there, but the house was further down the street, but there was 97 acres with that land. Well, we couldn't get that, so the guy says, well, the agent says, "Right across the street there's another." This one here had up to the, well, the shop, alot of land. So I wanted \$500 for a roof that, to fix the roof on the big barn and he wouldn't

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give me the \$500 for the new roof, you know, to just make the price less \$500 and I wouldn't come up the \$500 and I wouldn't buy it. We didn't buy it. So we used to come in there and we started to look at this piece of property that I could see from the window in the bathroom. And I bought it. Took a long time, but I bought it.

MN: Did you wait for it to go up for sale?

JB: No, it was never for sale.

MN: Why did you want that house so much?

JB: I didn't want the house, I wanted the farm.

MN: And is that the same farm that your parents had had?

JB: That's where we live now.

MN: And you wanted it because it had been your parent's.

JB: I wanted to farm. I wanted my father to quit working. And, I thought, well, Jiminy Willikers, if I could make it easy from all his hard, hard life. I used to get up at 4:00, 5:00 in the morning, milk cows in the morning, and then you come back in the house and you smell like a cow barn and you come to work. I had to wash, it was ridiculous, change my clothes. I used to, I used to know cows, no milking machines, just milk cows.

MN: You know, when your father first came to that place, he used to be --

JB: He lived at Greenwood Place. That's the same street.

MN: And where did he work then?

JB: Oh, he went to Ramsell's.

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MN: What's Ramsell's?

JB. You got a, you got some stuff down there from Ramsell's. That's a shop down on Mill St. They used to have a horse. They used to have a, like you say, they talk about the Clydesdale horses, well, my father used to drive the horse. They had a horse and team. Not, not the truck, but the horse. And he was a, well, when we used to take my father to feed the horse on Sun--, you know, on Sunday's, and my father used to let out the horse and he used to eat all the grass around the edges of the shop and everything else. And when he come, he used to have a kind of a crooked finger, he used to whistle, well, my wife used to hold her head because when the horse would run by, by the car, the ground shook, he weighed about 2200 lbs, you see. And I have a picture now where my father stands beside him and the horse's four feet would come up almost to my father's neck. He used to have this big collar, his name was Chap, Chappie. My father couldn't pronounce Chappie, so he used to call him Chop. He said, "C'mon Chop." And Chop used to bend his head down, my father put the collar on and he'd push it back on his neck.

MN; And what, and what did he used to work for?

JB: Ramsell's, L. B. Ramsell's.

MN: They deliver furniture?

JB: No, no, they used to take stuff there, a load, chairs, and bring 'em over to another part of the shop, and they'd take lumber and they'd load 'em on there and they'd bring it to the dry kilns or whatever they done.

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MN: Oh, so he would be the one who would load up the truck, the----

JB: Yeah, like you say, over here we used to have, in Heywood's, they used to bring coal to the place over here and the ashes, but they had trucks. Over there they had a horse.

MN: Is that company still around?

JB: No, the buildings are there, kind of depleted, Ah, dilapidated, too.

MN: What was the address?

JB: I don't know, you got stuff down there from L. B. Ramsell's, the Heritage, the Heritage Park has stuff from L. B. Ramsell's.

MN: But where is it, what's the address?

JB: Mill Street, Mill Street.

MN: And did your father work there for a long time?

JB: Well, during the depression, when I got out of school, and, he lost his job up in East Templeton, you know, he worked in East Templeton.

MN: I thought he was working, oh, oh, oh, this was before--

JB: Before. Now I'm getting out of high school, ah, schooling and me, we got along pretty good sometimes, but I can remember the time when my father got laid off or they closed the shop down, two years time, I was a Senior, I was a senior I guess at that time, and I could see that there wasn't much, much

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much change. There's no change, No change. No money. My father was working for two years. My mother and my father had a mortgage on their old house they had. And _____ (unintelligible). I can remember my mother, most important thing for her was to pay that interest. They had no, this mortgage where you pay interest and tax and everything else, it was only the interest at that time. And so, anyhow, I thought I could be one less mouth to feed so I went down to Army Base and tried to join the Coastal Authority. And the guy said, "Well," he said, so he starts turning over these pages. There was 4 pages of people waiting to join the Army. That was depression.

MN: And what was the company your father was at then?

JB: Well, he didn't get nothing--

MN: That was in East Templeton?

JB: That was East Templeton, he worked for Headstrom Union or CVC, I don't know which one.

MN: OK.

JB: No, he hasn't worked for 2 years, when a water bills came in, this is the city of Gardner, sometimes I like 'em, sometimes I hate 'em. My father had a water bill, he go up to the city, says, "I have no job, I have no money, but I can work this thing off." They let him work 3 days in a ditch. That's the way, after he paid the water bill, no more work. So don't think that the depression don't _____ something up here. It's still there.

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MN: And was your mother working at that time?

JB: Well, yeah, she, I think she did work very little in _____ Derby's. Derby Shop. That's a shop where, well a part of it, Jim _____ has a shop over there. And but she, she never worked. I think my father felt the same way as I do, the woman's place is at home. Cause my wife worked very little. She worked during the war years. I guess the most she worked about 9 months. Because when it came to her retirement, there was no way in the world she could retire on, on her thing. She, all her life's work she made maybe what people make in one year's time, so my wife stayed home. She had enough problem taking care of me, never mind working (chuckles) So this is by mouth, now all of a sudden my father got - I got out of school, don't do nothing much.

MN: What grade?

JB: Huh?

MN: What grade?

JB: Oh, high school. And I wanted to go to college. You know what, I really and truly wanted to be a farmer. Isn't that funny? That this is what I wanted to be. And, well, anyhow, the, there was no work, when I applied for a scholarship, I wanted to go to Amherst at that time, well, it must be University of Mass., I think it, I'm pretty sure it was Amherst. This is, well, 55 years, well, anyhow, I thought if I could go over there I'd work on the tables and do something like that. There was no

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hope for--

MN: Go where?

JB: To Amherst College.

MN: Oh, you'd wait on table, anything--

JB: Anything to try to do something and there was no hope, there was no way in the world I could get a scholarship. The marks were not that good, really and truly, all of a sudden I wanted to go to school and it was almost too late to do it.

MN: What year was this?

JB: Oh, about '33, and I was supposed to get out in '31.

But that's another part of the story. But anyhow, I got out of school, my father hasn't worked for two years, and in my graduating class, they says, "If you've got a suit coat, wear it. And if you haven't, if you got a sweater, come with a sweater." This was our class and the only thing that we had for a yearbook, is our Argus, was a publication that the printing, printing in the high school gave our class, I mean, that was our book. You have, when you get out of school, you have a yearly book, you have a hard cover book, you have beautiful pages, ours was pages like that, plain, printed on a paper Argus Graduation book. That was our graduation. That was--

MN: Most of the people in town were poor, then.

JB: Poor? You said it. Boy, you, people never, like you, you don't know what it is. I think we're going to come to another thing, it's going to be the other way around. It's going to be

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where you have to have this much money to buy this thing here. I always felt that if I had land I would never starve. Well, that's, that's the truth. Well, anyhow, when the school got all done, my father was able to run a scythe. You know what a scythe is? How they cut wheat and grass with a scythe. a hand, with a big scythe. Well, anyhow, my father went down to Ramsell's and he says I could trim the grass around the shop, you know, around there, so my father got a job, 25¢ a hour. And--

MN: After being out for two years.

JB: Yup, so anyhow, I come over here looking for a job, I got a job working 12 hours a night. I start from 7:00 at night to 7:00 in the morning, I get 25¢ a hour, too.

MN: Where?

JB: Right here in Heywood-Wakefield.

MN: In 1934.

JB: Well, 1934, could have been 1933, I really don't--

MN: Somewhere around there.

JB: --somewhere around there. 25¢. And--

MN: How did your parents feel about you working there?

JB: Well, it's, hey listen, they needed the money. It didn't make no difference. The only thing is, never stole, from them, and never robbed anybody. That's the only thing that we can say. Life was pretty, pretty tight. That's the first time I ever found out what the Salvation Army was. When, when we lived on Pleasant St. the kids would all go, well, they're

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gonna go to Salvation Army Christmas party. That's the first time I ever saw Santa Claus, and that must have been 9 or 10 years old.

MN: Your parents didn't--

JB: I never saw a Santa Claus when we lived in Otter River. And I thought it was the nicest thing when this Santa Claus gave me a bag of ice, uh, candy, and you know what? They got that back a thousand times.

MN: The Salvation Army.

JB: Yeah, still do. But now, coming back, when the NRA came in we got a, we got 32¢---

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MN: You said you started working at Heywood-Wakefield around, what were you doing in the night time, in the 1930's?

JB: That was when I was older, when I worked there, I tended saw, there's a band saw that they used to, oh, the saw, the saw blade must be maybe 10 feet. It's a circle saw that goes, it's a rip band saw and one man pushes the wood through and you take and you pile it, then you pile it. 12 hours a night. At that time, 25¢ a hour and then came to 32¢. Well, anyhow, in the meantime, I applied over th--, I did graduate high school, really and truly, I did graduate. Well, anyhow, one fella wanted to something, and that left a job, and I went over to the employment office and say, and you know what? I did start to work in the office. And I been there, well, I ended

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up was 45 years, what I ended up with?

MN: In the office? What did you do?

JB: No, no, not -- in the office, there was one man, oh, boy, this is going to be good. Politics is a nice thing, right ? This guy Perry, he used to work right down here in this building, the flat iron building on a back knife. He was a real clever man, he went only to 4th grade, and he started to run for mayor for the city of Gardner. And, what do you know, he became mayor in the city of Gardner. 4th grade, that's his education. But then he was a real, real honest-to-goodness, down-to-earth man. His language is common, ordinary street language, maybe people didn't like it that he wasn't afraid to say, "What a mouthful of it." Or if he thought was wrong, he'd tell you right off the bat. He wasn't, say, well, they'd call him uncouth and all these different things. But he had more brains in his head, well in his toes, more than people had in their head. Because through him I was appointed to the Board of Registrars to the city of Gardner. I seen him one time when we went down to the State House in Boston, how, how the people work in the state House. We would, something about the city that Rodante wanted me to go with him. And sure enough, I went with him, and we asked for directions over there and they told us up there. We walked into an office, there was two men over there, they're sitting at the desk reading a newspaper. Some little girl

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that came up, she said, "Can I help you?" So our mayor, he says, "Well, you go sit down," he says, "them two son-of-a_____ that are reading the newspaper, I'm paying them their God damn salaries, tell 'em to get off their ass." This is what he said, wow! You would never realize, he said, "I'm the mayor of Gardner. My name is Fred Perry." He says, those two guys dropped their newspapers so fast and they came over and says, "It's not funny. All of a sudden you guys get off your--." Well, the language wasn't quite complimentary or anything else but them men understood very good. And he says I want to know where this and this place was. Well, you get the impression when you come into an office that the women who are the clerks and everything, these are the ones who work, but them guys'd sit at the desk are figureheads. So anyhow, he pointed, he told us to go down 3 or 4 offices further. Well, what do you think? We got down 3, 4 offices, well, do you know when we hit that office door the man was waiting for us? There was nobody reading a newspaper in that office. And then we got the, we got the information what we wanted to, and then we went out to try to see the, see the governor, the governor of the state. If you ever seen a collection of hang-arounders, you want to go someday to the State House over here and see how many people are looking for something.

MN: The State House in Boston.

JB: That's in Boston.

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MN: And you said that Perry worked at Heywood-Wakefield?

JB: Sure, he worked over here, he worked on the first floor down here. In this flat iron building on the back knife lathes.

MN: And after you worked on the, loading up the wood, what did you say, your next job you had there was what?

JB: Oh, I worked in the office. I worked in the receiving room. And then, how I found out that--

(Background noise)

MN: OK, you went from the saw to the office?

JB: Up into the office, that was in the middle of the buildings between--. You know, now there's, there so, the wood shop, the one part of the shop is on Pine St., and the other part of the shop is on the railroad track side. Well, our office was right down the alleyway on the end.

MN: On which street, the railroad side?

JB: No, in the middle between the two buildings. That was our office right there.

MN: And what did you do in that office?

JB: The receiving room.. I used to take, we used to have a check or something that came in like you say, these pieces of paper, some department would order this thing here. Well, I would pull this, this paper out and then the _____

(unintelligible) came way over here. I used to, I traveled this shop all over, every department, that was my job. Everything, and then later on it became, when we wrapped up parcel post, we

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we used to do the mailing too, but the mail office used to be in the, in the, in the main office.

MN: So you would check to see if someone--

JB: If that came in.

MN: __if that particular item, they got it?

JB: Yes, yes, if it came in, we'd bring it with the check so you'd know where the department took the stuff. And you turn this thing in for payment, then when the thing was done it turned into, it brought into the office. I mean, in a round-about way it came in, that proved to them, when the invoice came in from the company, you could flip the checker that you got the stuff or parts of it. You know, sometimes it's a big item, you only got one item, so you only mark this item, and then the _____ would come back and then you'd file it in your file.

MN: And you did this job right after you had this stacking the lumber job?

JB: Yeah, yeah, this was tending a band saw. That was that, that thing.

MN: Oh, that's what came second?

JB: Band saw is the first job, 12 hours a night, before the NRA came in. After that I worked in, then when this Mr. Jones told me about the things that had been _____ (unintelligible). He says, "Joe, this is not a place for you." But, so then I decided I wanted to go up in the factory.

MN: You decided you wanted to go where?

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JB: Out in the factory. See, I was on a different kind of position. I was up in the, I was in the office, see, clerical work, but now I would have liked to have gone out in the factory.

MN: And do what?

JB: Well, do whatever there was, the shipping or load cars or load trucks so, push a truck, or anything. My typing wasn't what you say, the speed demon, I couldn't type, like you say, the hunt and peck system is very good. But, the, never, never, never too good. But the office work always, always done it.

MN: So did they send you out into the factory, then?

JB: I got, yes, I got transferred from this to the office, I mean, from the office to the factory. I became a checker, that means a checker, I could say, oh, this furniture stuff that came through here, well, you maybe, you check off the order that was going off to Manamane, Michigan or Kankakee or wherever it was going off to, the coast, or down in the south, or wherever it was, you would check it off and you would have your men load the thing on a box car or wherever it was transferred to. So this was, you get your orders, then you get your stickers. So this was that part. And then, well, you become a master of all kind of jobs. You have to. Then when they came in with the conveyor. That conveyor was, I guess a mile long.

MN: And when was this, about?

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JB: Uhh--

MN: Just more or less.

JB: More or less, how do I know?

MN: 1940? 1950's?

JB: 1940's the war work was here. 1940's, '42, '43, we used to load bomb fuses and the truck we load maybe 50, 60,000 lbs. in a box car of bomb fuses. Casings, yeah.

MN: At Heywood-Wakefield?

JB: Of course.

MN: Bomb fuses?

JB: Yeah. This shop right here.

MN: What does a furniture company have to do with bomb fuses?

JB: Well, _____ (unintelligible), they made furniture some, too, but the bomb fuses, that was the, they got a contract and they done it. And then they froze the salaries, you never got a raise. And, but, they had the fuses, they had the, what is it, the 155 mm. hard shells. Shells, they used to load them the 5 inch shell. They had that. They had cargo bodies that, you know what a cargo body is. It's a, it's a car, I mean a truck body that they made over here. That whole back part of the place was where they made the cargo bodies.

MN: Out of wood?

JB: Out of wood. And then they, the conveyor would pick 'em up, I mean the, yeah, conveyor would pick 'em up and bring the stuff out, out to the box cars.

MN: Oh, so they had a conveyor at about--

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JB: Well, that conveyor coming back now, now comes the computer into the shop?

MN: In World War II? No, no. In the 1960's, that was.

JB: Uh, I, it's hard to remember just--

MN: OK. Forget it.

JB: The computer came in, now, we have, now the people so used to doing these things, we had 12 or 14 packers coming in on the line, well, a computer, they used to have little tiny labels over, maybe inch by 2 1/2 inches, that would tell you, they'd give you number, maybe 1204A, that would be a chair, 1205 would be an arm chair, well, they have all these initials, now before they used to have tickers that came by, now when the conveyor came in there was on that other side of the street, that main offices over there, that was the side where the conveyor would be, well, this conveyor, we could turn out, maybe at the most 1100 pieces a day that could be shipped to a customer. That's how it was going. That's one tremendous amount of work that would go out on this conveyor. And it took, well, let's see, 2, 4, 6, 8, 10, maybe, 10, 11, 12 girls over there, and like I said, we used to have two ponies, what we called ponies, they used to, funny thing, they do the biggest pieces into those smallest little girls, they maybe weigh 110 lbs, 90 lbs,

MN: You called the women the ponies?

JB: Well, we called 'em, called 'em ponies, when you said, "I'll go see the ponies." you know who you're talking about.

MN: Those were the women that unloaded the---

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JB: No, no, these were the women that would pack these things.

MN: Oh. And they called them the ponies.

JB: Well, because they were small. In fact, we go to a _____ dance, you know, and one of the girls, she says, "You don't know me." I says, "I think I know you, you're one of the ponies." Jimmee whilakers, here's something that's unheard of when, well--

MN: They knew they were called the ponies.

JB: Of course, everybody knew that. If you said, "Go see the ponies." they knew who those two girls were.

MN: Oh, because they were little you called them ponies.

JB: Because they were little tiny. She's, I don't know, she goes to a line dance and her real name is Elvire. I hope you know your _____ (unintelligible), if you ever hear of it. (MN laughs). Because, that's true, Elvire, her name is Elvire. She's heard about this _____ (unintelligible). But anyhow, everybody had their own nicknames, that-- Well, anyhow, here come, here I come, I used to be ashamed, I'd take these little tickets and I would stick on these things. a guy who's better than 200 lbs., stick on these things, and these little tiny women would have to wrestle. Big bureaus and triple dressers, too, double dressers, chest on chest dressers, and here I am, I'm the guy that sticks on the label, and then these four women have to tug and pull and wrap this stuff up. When the people used to come for, they used to walk around when they had a tour, I was going to say tour of duty, a tour of the shop

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well, that used to be. I used to feel so bad because here I am, I go around and I keep sticking on these little things and these little, these women, have to wrassle around, some of the cases were bigger than they were. And they have to wrap these things, on the thing, and there I am, walking around putting on--(laughs).

MN: And you couldn't switch jobs?

JB: Well, you got to know every piece of furniture that is made, you got to know the number. If they, course they could have switched jobs, but would they know what the number is, and you can't stop that conveyor, because once you stop that conveyor, you're stopping, oh, I don't know, you have in the trim room, well, you could stop the thing--

MN: Only you'd stop the whole production.

JB: And if you went on the, it came down on the paint shop conveyor, you stop a whole mile long of track, the conveyor.

MN: Did people mind when the conveyor came in? How did they feel about it?

JB: Well, you have to remember that the people, most of the people have to work for a living. And, if this is what would help to keep the company going, I thought that, I was working in the office then, they used to check in, and I thought the conveyor was all right. And then I worked, really and truly on the conveyor, like I told you, I was sticking these things on, oh, I could do anything. This is the stories. I could

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do anything, I was a utility man for anything. If you needed somethings over here, I was there. There was some kind of new furniture came in and we have to pack it up so it wouldn't break. There's a thing that any body can pack a piece of goods but you had to deliver up in Kankakee, Michigan, or anyplace, unbroken, unscratched, and this is what it is. So we used to do a lot of sample, sample packing.

MN: What was your title?

JB: There's no titles. It was just a job. There was no titles. _____(unintelligible).

MN: So you must have had a good perspective on how the company operated.

JB: Yup.

MN: Was it organized by floors, like would there be certain kind of work on one floor?

JB: Oh, yeah. When the, when the, when the, now we're talking the conveyor.

MN: This is the era of the conveyor.

JB: This is the area of the conveyor. Now out of the wood shop, out of the trim room, well, how could I say it, you know what, the trim room is?

MN: No. Tell me.

JB: Well, a trim room is, well, the people from this flat iron building and that other building beside it--

MN: What do you call it, the flat iron building?

JB: This is the flat iron building. If you look at the

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top, it's a flat iron. Did you see this?

MN: Oh, that's the shape of the building.

JB: This is the, this building right here. Well, look at it, look out the window.

MN: And did everybody call it the flat iron?

JB: Everybody called it the flat iron. This was the flat iron building. And, like you say, it started from the from the _____ (unintelligible) up on the top. But anyway, on the third or fourth floor, and so, so now they bring these, this here is where the pots were all made.

Now we call it to the, they're going to set up bureas, the stuff that goes into the bedroom, chest of drawers, or double, there's a dresser here, a dresser, 2, 3 drawers up here that comes up, dresser on dresser, double drawers, night stands, beds, all the assembled, no the beds were assembled on the other, so anyhow, they go over the bridge and they come into what they call the trim area. Now the trim area is, they give you the size of the bureau, the two sides, the top, the, the, the, Heywood-Wakefield made good furniture because they had dust proof shelving in there, you never had dust that would go through your furniture. You could go anyplace in the world and pull out the thing and say, "That's a cheap piece of furniture." I mean, I could tell. Because you know why? A lot of them never had one of these things. A lot of the stuff that's made, well, now it's made better, but the few down south, they never used to do that. Because they have to make a frame, they have to put veneer in or, or fiber board so

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so that no dust would -, when you pull out your drawer, you have your other drawer sealed. You wouldn't see nothing. Do you know what dust proofing is?

MN: I'm starting to understand.

JB: And then when they made the drawers, there's what you call a dove tail. It isn't a piece of board that you come over here you nail this way? It's a dove tail, it's marked like this and these fit into one another.

MN: Oh, joints fit into each other.

JB: Did you ever look at -, when you go home pull out your drawer and see if you got dove tails.

MN: In the corners of the drawer.

JB: In the corners like this. They, they're cut out like this. And they fit, and you put glue in there, and the old himself won't pull it apart. And that means that things only that much smaller, but it's made construction for your life and the kids life. When you bought Heywood-Wakefield's furniture, you bought your -, your for life, you could keep your furniture for your life and your kids could keep it for theirs and they could keep it for their kids. That's the way the furniture was made. And if you didn't like the finish you just take that finish off and sand it down and refinish it because it was all hard wood.

MN: What kind of wood?

JB: Well, they had maple, had birch, and the last time they started to make, they had cherry, and the last, last, before I went away it was pine. Pine. I didn't think it was a good idea but who knows. But then, like you say, they started to

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moderenize, and, well then, Heywood, now, it comes the place where union help comes in. Now let me come, I told you how I became shop worker, no more.

MN: You can say this on the tape and I won't use your name. So you don't have to worry if you say it, it's going to get you in trouble.

JB: No, the people, the place is dead now. It's all been, it's all closed.

MN: Because you got to tell the real story so that history will know what happened.

JB: So anyhow, here, here comes the union. I, I, I get out into the factory, thirty days I work there, hey, you got to join the union. Thirty days--

MN: Oh, in the office you didn't have to join?

JB: No, no. I was a _____ (unintelligible) clerk.

Now I join, I, I, work out in the factory. Thirty, thirty, thirty days, I have to join the union. Thirty days, I join the union. We have, this is at the beginning. We have things from, I thought maybe I was going to get cut, because I came from one place to another. Well, anyhow--

MN: You mean because you came from the fac-, from the office down to the factory?

JB: Yeah.

MN: You thought they might--

JB: Well, because, how can you say the personnel, supervisor of personnel is maybe not self conscious - how can you say it? That, tthey'reu're not sure of themself and this job and this job

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something.

MN: Oh, so they were a little insecure because you'd worked in the office?

JB: But that don't mean nothing because, really and truly, but I could tell you --

MN: Tell me about the club. Hispanics, coloreds, were they all in your Polish club?

MN: Well, the Polish club is, it's supposed to be Poles, really and truly, but we have a distinction in there that if you are some other national, or, like you say, the colored, we have colored in our things. But let me just tell you how it became. One of them is, is a teacher. He's a really nice man, there's nothing wrong with these guys. He comes in, he gives me this application and he says the nationality is color, the nationality is black. Well, you know what? That sends shivers through me. There was no such thing as a nationality from my way of thinking as black. If you're born in this country, you're born American and I don't give a hoot what the heck you are. So anyhow, before the meeting, I didn't want to say this thing because if I ever got up before all the members and I'm the one that presents them to 'em, I tell his name, his age, where he lives, what nationality is, and who sponsored them from the regular club, you got to be a regular member of the club before you can sponsor some associate member. And if I told 'em, nationality was black, that would throw me in a tizzy, really, it'd shake me. So anyhow, before I presented

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this over here, I grabbed him on the side, and I told him, I says, "What the hell kind of nationality is black?" He says, "Well," he says, "well, look at me." I says, "I'm looking at you." I says, "I still don't know the Goddamn nationality, I can say your color's black, but the nation--" And I says, "What is your nationality?" I says, "You were born in this country?" I says, "You put it down as an American." And you know, I have never had no problems with any of them. We have some, we have some nice guys there. Some guys is a bartender. And honest bartender, sometimes it's pretty hard to find an honest bartender. You know. And, he's a heck of a nice guy. We have a guy, he's a real, rugged character, I think he's a coach. One day he comes in, he comes in and uses the machines. I mean the exercise room and he uses the machines. And he comes down, well, this is the way I know him, he's a marvelous guy, he's not a dumb bunny, because he is a teacher. Not that, not that teachers are clever, oh no, they're about the, I won't say what they are, but some of them are something, really. But then we have an Australian, but the poor soul he died, though. He, he was a comical man, but we have, we have French, we have Italians, we have Greeks, we have, well, Spanish, Hispanics, we have some Spanish guys, we even have some Polish guys, too. (laughs)

MN: I was going to ask you about that.

JB: We have some, but if you are, if your name is Cogan or

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Cormier, you marry a girl who's maybe some Polish name like Galisky or something like that, well, your father is called Polish extraction, he becomes a regular member. Now the regular member in the club has these priveleges. He can vote, that's something that associate member can't, but the associate member has all the benefits that the regular member can have. He can come to a parties, he can join anything that we have, the only thing he can't do as an associate member is, really and truly, vote. But we will accept his recommendations for something. But if there's going to be a discussion he can discuss. The only thing that he can't do is say, "I vote for this or you don't vote for--

MN: You have to be Polish.

JB: This here, you have to be a regular member. You don't have to be Polish. We have Cormiers who are regular members.

MN: Yeah, but they have some Polish blood.

JB: No. But see, you never even let me finish. Because if you're an associate member and you do good for the club and for the members and, like you say, you don't get no compensation and you keep doing this. Now we have a party, that maybe somebody has to peel potatoes, you know we have machines who peel potatoes, we have slicing machines, we have, well, we have all the machines you want. And to mash potatoes, we don't use a baseball bat no more to bat out the potatoes, we have a big vat from the hospital, well, this come from the hospital, and the hook and it mashes up the mashed potatoes. So, but if they keep doing

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good for the club and for the members, we have a committee of three members, that on October meeting, on the 3rd Sunday in October, these men will bring up these people to be elected as a regular member. So he, now he becomes a regular member. On top of that we have what we call a funeral benefit. That's not much, you never get rich, it's not an insurance, but we will buy you a plot of land to bury your body.

MN: And do you pay dues every year or so--?

JB: He pays dues every year. But after he stays in for 25 years and he's been paying his dues, we give him a lifetime membership. That's not all he gets, We have a country club, I give him a ticket to the country club for his whole family, for his kids, up to, well, up to 18 years of age. Now, there might be a distinction between, say, well, I'm 18, but it might be the club, the country club maybe will say, "Hey, listen--"

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TAPE TWO, SIDE A (March 3, 1988)

MN: If I turn it on, it works better, doesn't it?

JB: Huh?

MN: It's good.

JB: Is it plugged in, that's the story.

MN: Yeah, trust me. OK. Now start at the beginning, when the unions first started thinking about coming in to Heywood-Wakefield. Take me way back.

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JB: To go, to go way back--

MN: As far as you remember.

JB: --there was, there wasn't too much of a union international, but we did start what you call a local group to get together, any group that you met was called a union because you, the workers were combining themselves, I guess, should we say, the top branch of the shop. Well, you know, we did have a meeting in the Pine St. hall which is now part of Conant-Ball's warehouse, that used to be the Pine St. hall. We did, there was a hall upstairs where even they had a balcony, where the Heywood-Wakefield people met to make a private, independent, union.

MN: OK.

JB: So anyhow, but the, like anything else, everybody wants to have a finger in the pie. Well, when the pro tem got up on the stage and he says, now we'll have elections for the president of the local, you know, of the independent union. So they named one or two people and pretty soon the, somebody hollered downstairs that the place is closed for nominations. So all of a sudden, it ended up that we had nominated this and this man. He gets up on the stage, and he gets a gavel out of his pocket and he says, "Will the meeting come to order." Well, some people upstairs had hollered, "Where did you get the gavel from?" So you see, all of a sudden you have this question of being a rigged meeting. And you say, well, who rigged the meeting? How did they rig it? Did the company

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put these people up to, to run this meeting this way, to get these people who the agitators, or troublemakers, like everybody called them. So, you know, it didn't last too long. Whenever, everybody is fighting. So now a man by the name of Blackman, who's walking up and down the street, "Union, union, union, union." Well, it makes it pretty hard to union when you're afraid of your own skin.

MN: How was the atmosphere in the company? Were you scared to talk about the union at work?

JB: You didn't talk too much because you were kinda, everybody was kinda scared. This is a new thing to us in this area. This goes back, maybe 40 years, maybe more than that. It's a, so all of a sudden somebody talked about the union, you found out that you had no job and you try to get a job and you couldn't get no job.

MN: Oh, you mean, you'd be fired. Without a job.

JB: Well, I wouldn't say fired, that, that'd be something you could always pin your fingers on, but he say, "Wow, the work isn't going to be good, he doesn't do too good, he doesn't put," you know, "the effort that's supposed to be into it." They never say that you would be fired because you're talking about, of, why don't you get them together, we're forming a union. You don't do this, them kind of things, you just find yourself that you have no job. Well, the job, the job that you're doing is done away with. And they can't, they ain't going to place

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you in someone else's job. So, this, this the way the, shall we say, the manufacturer would work.

MN: And so you'd go to another company, and they'd say, "Oh, we have no openings."

JB: No, we have no open-, you have, you have no job. And this was it. And when jobs, you're working for 25¢ or 30¢ an hour, for an hour, you work 8 hours, you get \$3. 25 for a pay, and makes it kinda, you think twice. And then when the _____ (unintelligible) rate came in, you got this automatic raise of actually 32¢ an hour, that was the base pay, now, now, here comes the union, the independent union for Heywood-Wakefield didn't come out till later.

MN: Did that come after the NRA?

JB: Yeah, I think it did. This, this the thing, it's so long, you're talking now, you're just talking what you can remember.

MN: Sure.

JB: But now here comes a, there's a man by the name of Blackman, who's trying to organize the American AF of L. That kind of a union. Well, anyhow, did they organize, you sign up papers and all this thing here and you, but it didn't pan out too good. Until the CIO came in, the Congress of Industrial Organizations or, I think that's the name, they're still around, and, and then they came in and it seemed as if the people were kinda, well, everybody that works in a factory, where there is no, nobody to say, "Hey, you can't do this," too much. If you said something, you didn't have no job. So you took the

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miscues of these people and everything else. You just want to shut your mouth and you just work to make sure you get a week's pay. Well, anyhow, when the, the National Labor Board was born, well it came into being, see, here's another thing. I don't know when the National Labor Board came into being. So the National Labor Board holds a election for Heywood-Wakefield. Do you want the union or you don't want the union? Well the union made it, and it's pretty hard for these, well, like you say, it's pretty hard for the plant superintendents or the owners of the business all their life, they think that they were doing very good for you and find out that all of a sudden that you maybe got 800 people wanting to have a union? To go against something. Well, they must have had talks, maybe we're not doing something right and the, then the people, what do you do, you got the rules and regulations.

MN: The first union came in in 1964.

JB: Oh, no, this is, this has to come in before this.

MN: Oh.

JB: Because this agreement that they hold here--

MN: This is the agreement between the United Furniture Workers of America, Local #154 affiliated with the American Federation of Labor and the Congress of Industrial Organizations--

JB: Yeah.

MN: --and the Heywood-Wakefield Co., Gardner, Mass.

JB: These are the rules and regulations that, that the--

MN: Oh, and the agreement was entered into on the 30th day of

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September, 1964.

JB: But there is another agreement before, before, because the agreement was when Mr. Greenwood was the President and Bill Sterns was his plant superintendent. This book is only listed as, as with John, John Heywood and Bernard Riley was the assistant plant manager and Lupert Taylor was, and Tom Binnall, business manager and _____ Sweeney, who's the business manager for Local 154.

MN: But there was a union that came before this particular agreement, 1964 wasn't the first time.

JB: Well, this was the same company, I mean the same union, except I have the rules and regulations of this, this union that we're talking about. This is the union in 1964, but there was, the same union was in before '64.

MN: And you had the rules from when they were in before.

JB: There is rules, but I haven't got the book. This is why you're going to go see Mr. Sweeney, see if, see if he can help you out with the rules and regulations when Mr. Greenwood was President.

MN: OK. And Bill Sweeney was, what's his title?

JB: Well, he the, he's the busnines manager for Local 154, CIO.

MN: OK.

JB: See, Local 154 has been around for, well, when Heywood-Wakefield, Heywood-Wakefield was the biggest plant was around here. And they're still here, because business here, Sweeney is

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still the business manager for, for quite a few shops, I don't know if it's Conant-Ball, in this local area, there's still, still the thing.

MN: Oh, there's still a question of whether--

JB: Still, still

MN: --the company should have a union or not?

JB: No, no the union's all ready established.

MN: In all the companies--

JB: Well,--

MN: --more or less.

JB: More or less. Some of the people that don't have no unions actually have a better set up than the people who have unions.

MN: Now, how did, the people that wanted to join the union, were they looked at communists or socialists, or anything?

JB: Well, you been called everything. Ha. You were called everything. That's true. And now it seems as if it doesn't mean anything, but you want to remember, there was no, nothing like this before. There was nobody that, whoever heard of a man working at a machine telling the boss, "Why don't you go _____(unintelligible) someplace else?" Huh? Or that he couldn't, if he has some grievance he has to file papers, grievances, they have a grievance committee. There's a grievance, there's a grievance, an article in this paper, I mean in this booklet that tells you what you can do and what you can't do. And you better learn it. Each, each, each division, each department had a steward, and you didn't actually go to, well, the procedure is this way, you go see a steward, the steward goes

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see the foreman, they dicuss this thing, and then if you can't settle your argument, the piece work rate, or something wrong that, then you have a grievance committee that meets with the company and they try to trash it out this way. When, when the grievance committee starts meeting, down in the, well, wherever the room is going to be, you, as the man who filed the grievance, are going to be presented. You're going to present yourself down there at this meeting because papers are written, that's true, and you pass in this thing here. But they don't quite believe, well, maybe they believe you, maybe they don't. But you stand there before these people the union and labor, from the plant management. So now you're standing in the middle, they will make a decision, are you right or are you wrong?

MN: And you hear the whole thing.

JB: Oh, the people that are in that grievance procedure hear the whole thing. And then, if you're not satisfied, there's what you call arbitration court, or arbitration clause, you can go through, arbitration.

MN: OK, We'll take it, I'll tell you the question again. I want to take you back, when the CIO, you said that the AFL didn't take too good but the CIO did.

JB: CIO. The CIO did.

MN: So how was it, they start to come in and do people start to talk about it more openly? How is it they joined?

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JB: Well, all of a sudden, you know, this is a, like you say, it's been stormy for so long, all of a sudden, there's somebody that would, would maybe help you. And maybe you need this help. There's a lot of grievances that these people who work had grievances to file that, but how you gonna do it, you can't go over there if you have nobody backing you. You go to the boss and say, "Hey listen. The price is too low, I can't make anything, I can't make a day's pay." What does the boss tell you? There's no use in saying anything because it's human nature that you say, "Well, if you don't like it, why don't you get out?" You can't go, because there was no place else for you to go.

MN: If you go there, they pay the same wage.

JB: Well, they treat you the same way. And this is why sometimes the timers were the butt of the most jokes of anything, because, it's like everything else. But see now, here comes a point between the company and this, the union, if you wanted to join the union, if you signed these papers, that you give the union the binding right for you. But if I didn't want to join the union, I didn't have to join the union. They didn't have to, they couldn't make me.

MN: Then who would talk to you if you got into trouble?

JB: Well, you hope that the bosses would listen to you.

MN: Oh, because you didn't join it, so they would like you better.

JB: Well, I wouldn't say a thing like that, but most of the

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time it's half right. But some people don't believe in this, this the unions.

MN: What would they have against the unions? Why wouldn't they join?

JB: Oh, this is, what you're saying, you used to use the word communist, you're a communist, if you work for this, you got to give me some of this. Well, communism is only a word, really, it isn't, it isn't your, really and truly, your life. maybe on some, like you say, in some parts of the world, it is so, but, the fruit of your labor is given to somebody else and you get part of theirs for theirs. This here is, if you work, you get your thing and you kept it. Now, if this is part of communism, I don't believe that. Because everybody seems to have to work. Maybe different categories of the work, but you're gonna work. So now here, here's this paper that you don't sign and then comes the office help, the office help. The office help is always under the management services or whatever you want to call 'em. They, they treat these bosses, what you say, a little bit different than, than the plain, common, ordinary laborer. They have their organizations, they used to have a foreman's (MN sneezes -excuse me) a foreman's organization and, and you know what, most of these--

MN: A foreman's association?

JB: Yeah, foreman's association.

MN: Was that a kind of union?

JB: It was, well, it was a, was a like a kind of a union and,

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for the foremen, but not affiliated with the CIO or nothing.

MN: Did that come before the CIO came in?

JB: Oh, no, this is, everything that's happening now is, once the poeple have, have a union, now they have somebody who talks for them. Who has somebody, if you have a grievance, somebody stands behind you. And one time when they had a terrible disagreement, I can remember then, Heywood's was going to be a big sales meeting and things weren't going so good, they went out on the 9th, an 8 week strike, which was a terrible, terrible blow for, for the company and a terrible blow for the people, too.

MN: Was that the first strike?

JB: That was the first, well, no we had, they had little independents, there was a labor dispute in the shipping department, now the shipping department, they rolled all the trucks and the boxcars, I mean, the boxcars are the B & M railraod. Well, the B & M, the railroads have a very strong union. And you know, the truckers have a very strong union. Here we, here they are in this shipping department, everybody knows the truckers that come in, everybody knows the B & B people that come in and pretty soon you're talking to them, say "Hey, you know, we might bé having to go out on strike. We don't want you to come in here." "Well, what's the matter?" Well, they start telling you, OK, OK, so they go and tell their bosses, the trucks, the trucker, the trucker outfits, that, hey, there's a, there's a strike in Heywood-Wakefield

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that's gonna be going on, says, but the truck drivers still have to 'take orders, too, from the bosses. But the bosses know by this time because their unions have been in existence a great deal longer. They know what terrible strikes they have. The railroads know what it is. So, when you say strike well, you're friends with all these people who work, you say, gee, who's gonna load the boxcars if the B & M sends up the railroad cars? Well, then, when something happens, are you gonna be friendly with these people who come in to try to break you, huh? Or do you tell the guy, says, my job is - you handle that thing. Instead a truck driver comes over there, he stands, he helps your--. Are you going to get in his truck and help him load his thing? You just go over there and you drop it. You pick it up. Even if it, even if it weighs two, three hundred pounds. You pick it up. All these things, they're not big things, but when you take all these little things brother, he's got to work, you've got to work, you're gonna help him, he's gonna help you. So he doesn't come in.

MN: So, in other words, the truck driver wouldn't come in.

JB: That's right. If we walked out there with a sign that says "Heywood-Wakefield is on Strike" he isn't going to cross that picket line.

MN: Because, even if his boss, would his boss order him to cross the line?

JB: Well, sometimes they would. But they're only asking for trouble. They may get a smashed windshield. Or they get a

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punctured tires, now a tire and the windshield, it's not much money, but you bust the things and then the workers that are more friends with these people are no longer their friends. Do you think you'd be friends? You'd be willing to, as you maybe read in some papers down towards the south, they kill one another. They shoot 'em. You know, do you want a thing like this.

MN: So wouldn't the unions, the truckers and the railroad be sympathetic?

JB: Jes. That's the nicest word you said. They'll sympathize with you. The demands are not that great but the company feels that, that being, taking advantage of or something. But then you sit down and you change the system. And, sure enough, they did change the system for the shipping department.

MN: Do you know what their complaints were in the shipping department?

JB: Well, yeah, because, they used to load the boxcars by so much, when they settled up they got a bonus. If they loaded so a million pounds of freight. They got so much money. But if they loaded a million and a half pounds, or say a hundred ton, if they loaded a hundred ton of freight, and that week they loaded, the next week, they loaded 250 thousand ton, well, they get a bonus because they worked the same number of hours but they would get a bonus.

MN: If they loaded more things.

JB: Because they loaded more things. This helped, helped the

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the people that worked in that department. But it didn't work always that way. Down in the sanding room, there was quite a disagreement that the boys got, weren't, weren't happy with the thing, were really and true, don't know the standing, what happened, but anyhow, they, they walked off. And they are still walking. No, really and truly because they were, when they walked off--

MN: In the sanding room?

JB: In the sanding room, up in this flat iron building here, they were actually told not to come back.

MN: Was, was that the same time as the--

JB: No, no, these are different, these are different incidents. Sometimes it works in favor of you, sometimes it works in favor of the company. Well, the, the, the, the people that went off their jobs in the sanding room actually lost because they lost their jobs.

MN: Well, go back to the shipping _____ (unintelligible) for a minute. In the shipping room, you said, OK, they would get a bonus if they loaded more things. And what was their complaint again?

JB: Huh?

MN: Why were they, why did they go on strike?

JB: Because they wanted a little bit more money. They says well, how can we pay you any more money? Well, let's make a greater effort, the company says. You don't make no more effort. The guy says sure we make an effort. Because, the,

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everybody's a, you're not going to stand around doing nothing, really, you have to work so if there was this incentive to make you push out more work - . See, when the man, what you would call a checker, now this goes into the, into the shop, a checker, he has maybe two men that goes with a truck, that goes maybe the third floor, the fourth floor. And he picks up all these things that the customer wants. He tells the checker, this goes into cart A or B or C or D so the man that loads up this truck, it's a two wheel truck, it takes maybe 5, 6 pieces of furniture. So he goes into car C and he loads this thing for this customer for, for car C. Then maybe that, the other trucker, he went down there, down to the third floor and he picked up maybe some settees or or anything that was unloaded on the third floor and he would bring 'em down to car B. Because he's starting to load another thing. When the other man would be - this is the work, so. For the setter the man would walk faster with the truck or they'd get more weight in. And that was the incentive. So now here comes the people are happy that they have this little bit of incentive. And everything's running, there is no arguments, the bosses are happy because nobody has to watch one another. And, and the thing ran good. Until some started that first, what they say, when it was an 8 week strike, that was a terrible strike. The whole plant was shut down

MN: Well, did it begin there with the shipping department--?

JB: Well, no, the shipping department was just one little

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incident, the sanding room was just one little incident.

MN Oh, and this was all part of this 8 week strike?

JB: Oh, no, this 8 weeks, when the, when the management, when I say management, that's the company, that's the, that's the company, they were going to start on a big sales promotional things, they're gonna all these people to come in. You must remember Heywood-Wakefield was, as you see the plant, it was a very large, large operation. So anyhow, they started from the west coast down in L.A., I mean, Los Angeles, in Manamane, down south, all over the place, really in Canada. Well, they're gonna meet down here for the sales convention and what d'ya think that's the time that the strike went on and shut down. And that was about the Thanksgiving Day, but the union wasn't that good.

MN: I know you don't know dates, but do you think that was in the 40's or 50's--?

JB: I, I, don't know, but Mr. Sweeney would know.

MN: OK, OK. All right, tell me about the gates again. There's a gate where?

JB: There's a gate, when we say gates, when we went on strike, this is the strike, supposedly the big strike. Well, there was a gate right here where there used to be the boiler room, not the boiler room, but this is where they used to have a gate here. The men from this area would hold up the signs and they'd picket this thing here. Down by the railroad tracks they had a gate over there that maybe some member, nobody would

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use that, they used to be able, uh, trucks could come in in the middle, between the buildings over there where the Binnall building is, I mean the _____ building and all this thing here. But there was people here. Now we come over here on Central St., the main office and the gate is over here, they had pickets walking the line, picket line on the front of the gates over here and the doors over here. But at the same time we, we had pickets down on Pine St. where the trucks would come in for to pick up stuff and deliver stuff, materials, then we had another pair gates that where the cars were parked they used to be able to come in with trucks and, and we had pickets on the B & M line over here. I don't know who's, but it's the railroad. We had pickets over there.

MN: So the trucks couldn't come in--?

JB: So you walk the picket line, so trucks come in, says, "Hey, listen. Don't come in, there's, we're on strike." They go up to the other gate, you can't go there, there's a strike. So now there's a total strike. This is not one little department. This is a total strike, the shop is shut down.

MN: So all the departments had to get together to organize this.

JB: This is, this was the whole department, whole shop. There is no such thing as a department this, a department that. Even the people who didn't belong to the union would not

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cross that picket line.

MN: Oh, really?

JB: Yes.

MN: So nobody wanted to--?

JB: Nobody worked. So this is a total thing. So now, here we are, here comes, now--

MN: This must have been the strike in 1960, I bet.

JB: I don't know.

MN: When they asked people to take a cut in pay. Was that it?

JB: It ended up that way, because Greenwood, I shouldn't say, the President, well, president at that time, and he, we met in the City Hall and after, for such a long time we met and really and truly, what you said, there was little clauses that gave you something but, but truly a fact, you took really and truly a cut and you went back to work. And you didn't gain, and you lost your wages for all them weeks. But let me just tell you, you walked the picket. I personally did walk the picket line over there, because I knew everybody that was going to come through there. All you have to do is just say, there's stop and think of what's going to be happening, some day this is going to be settled. You don't want an enemy for life. And--

MN: Well, I bet a lot of friendships were made and broken over those picket lines.

JB: Well, it's like. Now, you and your husband, they, they

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you're doing very nicely. All of a sudden something has gone wrong and you split apart like this. Do you think its easy for you to get back? Something has got to be for-, somebody's got to be forgiving somebody something. So this is the, Greenwood had to do something to make this thing here. And the people had to do something this way. And we voted up in the City Hall to go back to work, and now we gone back to work, but before you gone back to work, you walked the picket line, right? The people say, "Well gee, if you walk the picket line, the union is going to give you some money," right? I mean, you would think they would. Well, I walked the picket line, this is true. We met over here in a hall up on Stevens's block, up on a, up on a second floor over there, that's where the union hall was. Personally I got \$10 for two weeks of picketing.

MN: Big deal.

JB: Well, that's all right, I got the \$10 and I says, "Oh, boy, here I am," I didn't have much of a long time to work but I did walk the picket line sometime from 6:00 in the morning to 9:00 in the, in the, in the morning, too. Then I'd go up in the union hall, I'd put my name and say, "Well, I walked the picket line." Have a cup of coffee and then I'd go home. The next morning, here I am before 6:00, I walked in the lines, I'm walking the pickets and, every day, I'd do the same thing. I'd go back to the union hall, meet some of the friends that you been working with, we have a cup of coffee and we try to discuss something. How can you discuss something when you haven't

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got pay coming to you? Well, anyhow, they, they, the organization, the CIO, I mean the union says, "Well, come on,, you're going to get paid, " or whatever the thing was. I just recall this, so we went up there and I was entitled, I guess to \$10.

MN: Because they couldn't get you any money for pay when you're on strike?

JB: Oh, you're on strike. So anyhow, but, as, as, the time went on, well, the main, it kind of hurt me that here I am, I walked, not too long, but I did spend a early morning hours and let other people sleep and I walked for two weeks. I got \$10. But as the, as the time progressed, I could know, know some of our members in that department, they--

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JB: Well, I felt hurt that I was only worth \$10, I thought I was worth more than that (laughs).

MN: And they gave other people Thanksgiving things?

JB: Well, I mean this is here, this is coming into Thanksgiving and these people that did walk, they, they got turkeys and they got some baskets of fruit, but, but that's another part of the story. And then when we had the meeting, I think everybody went back and it was, like you say, this was a defeat for, for the people actually.

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MN: How was the morale?

JB: Well, I wouldn't say defeat, because we all have, we have our own ideas of what you want to do. And, it seemed to be as if we was able to work, and I think at the same time they changed our pension that the people had. The company, Heywood-Wakefield, gave the workers a pension, that after you retired, and from the local, then if you worked here and you retired, the, the local, the CIO, 154th CIO, would give you a life ins-, I mean an insurance for, for you, well, life insurance, period. It don't do you no good while you're living but it might do you some good when you're dead. But the policy was, was not what the people thought it was. (whispers something, unintelligible)

MN: Yeah, tell, tell. We need to know the truth for the records.

JB: Well, the union, union policy is, well, the plant manager would come up and they'd make a big _____ (unintelligible), the departments would gather, say, "Well, here's your paid up life pol-, your insurance policy from the, from the union.

MN: Life insurance or health insurance?

JB: Yeah, no, life insurance, life insurance, from the union. But you must remember when you say insurance policy, there is so many different kind of policy, and it's all right as long as the company's paying the premiums on these policies, that the people that were there, because it was a term insurance.

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And if you told a person that, if the company don't pay the insurance, you have no insurance. Well, you know what, it's so hard for people, the common ordinary people to, to say, "Well, I hate to tell you, but I tell you what you are." Let's say it this way, that you're a nut. Look what the company gave you the, the union gave me the policy and at the same time there was, if you got sick, they had this policy, they had, they gave you \$10 towards eyeglasses. I talking, that, this is the union. And the company went along. This is for the, for the benefit of the worker. And everybody thought that was pretty good, the union gave something and the company gave something, because the company was still paying the premium for the policy. Except as the years went by things went bad for the company. That's the first time that people found out that the policy was not what they thought it was. Because when the company start, stopped paying the premium, the premium, that policy expired. They had no policy. We met down to the union and the union tried to explain it, but it's pretty hard to explain common, ordinary people, what kind of a policy you got. They had such arguments and everything else that tell you your crazy and everything else, like that man, he got his insurance, and this and this and this, but it ended up when Heywood filed Chapter 11, bankruptcy, they no longer pay the premium, unless you paid it out of your own pocket that policy was worthless.

MN: So. Heywood-Wakefield stopped paying the premiums, people didn't realize that, the union alerted them and said,

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"Look, you don't have any insurance any more." Although people didn't understand the details.

JB: So at this meeting, when we went down to the union hall, the, the, the CIO tried to explain to the people that this was a term insurance policy. If you paid this premium to the local, it was just like to an insurance agency, this is the Local 154, CIO, if you pay your premium, or you send it, your policy would be in force, this is a plain insurance policy that anybody can have. But if you didn't want to pay the premium on this policy that premium was cancelled. And I think for the first time many people realized that this was what they had. Even the people who retired. Now people have retired, they're still living, and they find out if they don't pay a premium on this policy, they have no policy.

MN: OK. This insurance, this was before the company obviously closed down--

JB: Yeah, the policy.

MN: --But it must have been close to the end of the company, right or no?

JB: Well, as long as the company paid, you got to remember, as long as the company paid the premium, that insurance policy was in force.

MN: Now what about, what about the retirement. You guys are on Social Security system.

JB: Well, now, retirement benefit--

MN: Was different?

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JB: --there is, the, the salary help had one kind of a pension, and the local, I mean the people who worked the, shall we say, a time punching clock, time punching person, had another. Another retirement plan. The company would put so much money into this retirement plan. Now the, the salaried employees, there's the vice-president and the president, and the treasurers and the secretaries and the executive board, the superintendents, and the people who are actually foremen,, I imagine they came into it, they came in to another category and they had a different set-up than the people who worked in the shop. And the people who worked in the shop, that is a different kind of policy. But they were still combined with the same thing if the company put in money into the pension plan, they collected. But then we have another one that's the IAU's.(?) They, electrical, that was another union that they had to take care of.

MN: Yeah, I wanted to ask you about that, too. I mean, I know this is a bit of a digression, but--. The CIO was the union for all the non-salaried employees.

JB: The CIO was the union for the, shall we say, workers. But the elec-, the electrical union and the power house was a different union. And then the foremen had their own little union, I mean, I don't know what they called it, but they used to call it the Foremen's association. They would have parties and everything else, --

MN: The foremen didn't come under management? Where they

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part of management?

JB: Oh, yeah, management? Well, the management sits behind a desk. (chuckles) The foreman, he's the man who has to work with these people. He get an order, he says, "Well, geez, I got so much of this stuff here and so much of this stuff here." Well, he's the man who gets these orders and he's the one, "OK, Joe, Frank, Jim, Bill, whatever, here cut this thing out. If you're going to be in the wood shop, cut this load, cut this load, run it through the sticker, run it through the sanders or glue the joints or glue it up or run it through the back knives or," or all these things. He's, he's that man. You can't have a hundred and one people working and each one is going to do individual, you have this one man who is the foreman. This is his boss. Like you say the boss, he's in charge of these people.

MN: Would he socialize with his workers?

JB: Well, sure, you could socialize, except, sometimes he, but when the foremen met, the workers didn't associate with the foremen. They was a separate breed. But, like you say, he has to work, too.

MN: What about in the workers, Were there some people that had, sort of, higher status jobs than others? You know what I mean?

JB: Well, status, how could you say, a status job?

MN: Like you said that the shipping, sometimes would be a rough place.

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JB: You know, when I say rough place, because the people that are down there, everybody uses rough language. I mean, if you ever, you should say, we're dock workers, we work on the dock. And the dock workers are just as tough as anybody else in the world. They may be, sometimes, hard drinkers, their language sometimes isn't the world's best, but, if there's work to be done, they do it and they say nothing. They, they may be rough, I just want to show you that these people, they handle not little pieces, like in the wood shop, they say, well, the man, he cuts a piece of board, he cuts only a little piece of board and he can cut a hundred of these boards but when it comes down to the shipping room, them hundred boards are made into one piece of furniture and that thing weighs three, four hundred pounds. So most of the time, this is what you handle every day, day in and day out. Most of the time you become a little tougher than the majority of them.

MN: I guess my question was, were there better and worse jobs within the plant?

JB: How could you say better and worse? It was a job, now, what do you mean by better job, you sat on your fanny and you got a big wide, should I say that now? Well, that, or is it that you work phsically, that you load a truck and you bring it down and you find out that outlive all the other people who sat on their butts.

MN: Well, I know in the textile mills, like if you were a --

JB: Oh, no. The textile is not like this. Because you

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you took care of the looms, but this here, well, the hardest thing in the loom is you handled these little things that you joined up, things together when they broke, but over here, you took one piece, like you say, if you're going to load a triple dresser. That triple dresser may be two hundred and maybe sixty five pounds. Now you can't take this dresser and throw it on the side and do this, because you break your corners or you break your joints, and you destroy the piece of perfectly good furniture because of your bum handling. It's going to get handled, bum, by the time it gets to the customer. That's why in many of the places, we used to have, load the boxcars to one warehouse down in wherever was going to be, we load up the cases, maybe three high. They would come on a fork truck and they would pick these cases up and they'd bring it down but we used to have to do _____(unintelligible) and you, actually thing. We load bomb fuses, we load maybe 60,000 lbs, well, yeah, 60,000 ton makes 120,000 ton, we load the bomb fuses maybe only a little higher than your knees. But we loaded them. But that was during the war years.

MN: Oh, I guess I was, my question really was, if you had a son or daughter that was going to work at Heywood-Wakefield, would you want--

JB: You would want in the shipping department.

MN: --that's what I mean, where would you want them to work in the company?

JB: Well, maybe in the office. The office, like you say,

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the office help now, the office help, you sit there and you get a back ache, you get a headache, but yourself now, you talk with a lady who says, "Well, what did you do?" She says, "I worked at the head of the line of the conveyor." Remember her? And she said, "Well, what did you do?" She said, "I sprayed." and there comes by this thing and there she is, she sprays with a spray gun and she's spraying this furniture. If she's putting on the stain no sooner she's got this done than someone else is going to pull that bureau or that chair off it, put it on the side and wipe it. To get the tan or shading or all these different things that come into a being. Or they're going to sand, they sand, the conveyors go on, they sand, they take off the bubbles on, on the things, to make, to make it a good finish. As long as you made it a piece of furniture everybody worked because people, Heywood-Wakefield was, was well known for their good workmanship and the last, I said, you bought the set, you could give it to your kids, your kids would last it and your grandchildren would last it and their kids would last it. That's the way the furniture was made.

MN: Did people feel proud of the furniture?

JB: Yes, yes. Yes. When you go visiting out-of-town or New York and New Jersey, says "Boy, you work at Heywood-Wakefield." "Oh, sure." "C'mon, I'll show you what I bought over there." And then when they look at the price tag, they say, Well, Jesus, that's so-so. But when they tell you how much they're

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paid for it, Ohhhh. You get kind of shocked, too.

MN: OK. To get back to the unions. We talked about the strike, you walked on the picket. Tell me what happened, you know, there was a resolution, you went back to work?

JB: Yeah, they signed, they signed the contract, that means the union, everybody doesn't sign the contract, but you have these representatives, like we say, you have the business manager, and the local manager, like you say, at that time was Tom Binnall and Lupert Taylor and then you'd have the shop chairman, the vice shop chairman, and then you'd have this people that were on the union's committee. It can be, well, I can remember we had as many as 12 people on the local, I mean 154's people, like we say, the binding unit. And, so they signed the agreement and the company would be the president and the plant manager, you had to take your, what the union agreed to, you took it. There was no alternative for you. You had, you had your say if you wanted to have something to say, at a meeting. Because we used to hold meetings, too. And people used to hold a meeting. But--

MN: At the company?

JB: No, no, the company - , we had our own union hall over there.

MN: Where?

JB: Up here, up on the Stevens's block. That's in there, too. That's when we, when we got up here, so we got the money from 'em.

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MN: OK, you lost me. You had a strike, you go back to work. What happens to the union after that?

JB: The union and the management got along fairly good because we never had another strike, strike at the plant. Everybody was hurt, the company was hurt, really and truly, and the people were hurt, they accepted a lot of things that Greenwood offered before, before the strike. After, after you go out on strike, you get kind of upset, everybody, the union get upset, you as an individual are upset. You try to think well, gee, what if I voted this way, what if I voted that way? It's all ready to late because the machine is already in motion and you abide by the rule even if you're wrong. You're going to bide by what the people say. Cause alot of the people have lost, some of the people started to walk through the picket line. They never were, what you say, the nicest people with the rest of the people. Some of the people that had never belonged to the union, well, they were kind of smiling because they never had to pay no union dues. Every month you are accessed some union dues, that was taken out of your pay, the company would agree to, this would be a part of the agreement, that they would take your, your money out of your pay and they send you, send the whole check, whatever the people, how many people, they were sending it to the union. So this is the way the company would help the union, the union would help the company.

MN: Did more people belong to the union than not?

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JB: Oh, yeah, there's more, there was very few people that didn't go, but sometimes when you stop and think that' these people who don't want to join the union or whatever thing, they have a right to their own opinion.

MN: (Unintelligible)

JB: What is this thing here? That they have a, they have a right to their own, see you can't fault a man or woman that does not believe the same as you do. A person, the other person works with their hands and their body like everybody else, like you do, and if I don't believe in your union, does that mean I, I'm a bad person? No. For us this was something terribly new. That came in to, to this city. That all of a sudden there's a big division. And that, that's all it was--

MN: But you did cause it. I mean people that belonged to the union did have bitter feelings against those who didn't.

JB: Well, of course, they had--, because he got the same benefits as you did and it don't cost them a stinking penny every month, even though you are allowed to take, to deduct the union dues off of your taxes. Do you follow what I mean? Every month, they took so much money out of your pay. The man that didn't belong to the union, had all the same benefits as the union man, except he never paid no union dues.

MN: You were representative from the union.

JB: Yeah.

MN: Who did you represent?

JB: The people. Well, see, the plant is so big there was a

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man by the name of, well, he's dead now, Francis _____
that he would always handle the grievances from the wood shop
side and I would handle the grievances from the paint shop side
and the machine shop side and everything else on this side.
So if you had, the worker had a grievance, that this one man
wouldn't have to take time off and punch out a card because
the union would ' pay you for the time that you spent doing
the union's work, you got compensated through the union.

MN: Oh, but you had to punch out from--

JB: You punched out from your job and , like you say, from
then on the union was paying your salary. So that was, to
divide, this is an enormous plant, you divide this spot here
from the other plant.

MN: And how often would people come to you with grievances?

JB: Well, sometimes all the time. You can't, you can't tell.
A man maybe is spraying over there. Right? And they push the
conveyor down maybe three more feet an hour. You know, by, by
removing this big drive shaft that's over there, they, they could
speed up this conveyor and it would come by faster. The shipping
room conveyors could travel twenty two feet a minute. Now the
paint shop conveyor was a little bit slower. But the shipping
room conveyor used to travel about 22 minutes, 22 feet a minute.
So, well, you figure that, Giminy Willakers, they kept pushing
and pushing. Once this conveyor starts it doesn't stop.
Because once you start, you maybe got a hundred people on the

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paint shop con-, because that paint shop conveyor was a mile long. And it went through the ovens and every thing else. So once you stop that, you stop a hundred people from productive work. And now, who in the world wants to pay, if I was a company, do you think I would enjoy paying you to stand and watch this iron horse stop because some jerk down the line couldn't take care of it?

MN: So nobody ever stopped it, did they?

JB: Oh, sure, you, you stop. It stopped, really and truly. But it stopped for a reason. You just couldn't go over there that you were mad at someone that you'd go and stop it.

Oh, no, you couldn't do a thing like this. Because you can understand that the company's gotta, in order to survive, they gotta produce. And if you is to survive, you gotta make that company produce too. So it works hand in hand with the other one. But the paint shop conveyor was a mile long. So you got to remember, except when it went through the ovens, it was maybe off, but after it got out of the ovens, well, you had all these people, you had maybe eleven or twelve wrappers down in the in the shipping room. You had the rubbers and sanders and the trimmers, all these people that were, you stop that, you stop that conveyor and here I am, I can sit down and rest and I'm getting paid regardless. But there was provisions in the union contract that would compensate for one thing or another. But that's another completely different story. These are the working

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conditions of the union and the company that has been worked out and accepted by the, by management and labor.

MN: Well, give me an example of a grievance somebody might have.

JB: A grievance. Well, I'll just tell you. This man is he's got to work late that night and everything else and he, this was--, ask the question.

MN: OK. So, you're telling me an example of a grievance.

JB: OK, this man files a grievance, or any man filing a grievance. Sometimes things are, once the grievance is filed the procedure is this, the steward of the department will go to the, to the superintendent or the boss, or someone else who's able to take care of it and you discuss it. Now if you cannot get the satisfaction for the man, because you're not working for yourself, you're working for the man who has filed the grievance because he's been hurt, one way or another.

MN: Maybe he wants a raise, or--

JB: Well, a raise, or he wants a different working conditions, or something like that, so now, there is nothing that the foreman or the superintendent can do so you turn this thing into the plant management. The, the, super-, not the superintendent, but the plant management?.

MN: Is it written at this point?

JB: When we ask, it's on black and white.

MN: Even when the steward goes to see the --

JB: Everything is written because this is presented to the at the first stages you have this regular grievance against, well,

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the man has got a grievance against the company. Since you are the superintendent, you are the representative of the company in that local area. Once that, once that man and the local area can't settle it you got to turn this thing over to the management. The company management. This is as high as you can go. So then the procedure is, if the manager, the plant management can't do it, you got to go to arbitration. So this, before it can go through the thing, most of the time, it's settled. So now you have a meeting that the management, the plant management and the union and the man that has a grievance, you came in there to represent him. So you present the grievance and the plant management says, "What are you, are you a troublemaker? You're just trying to stir up trouble. What are you talking about?" This and that side. He says, "Well, why don't you go and ask him if it, if it isn't done."

MN: So if he wanted a raise they would have given him a raise behind your back?

JB: But in the meantime, when they know that this is coming up to the, the management, this is, see, this was all the beginning when nobody knew what was going to be happening.

MN: So the management was trying to undermine the power of the union?

JB: Well, if you want to say it. Not the management, the, whatever it is, because they are part of management. And that's the way it was. That they would give you this raise and, when it came to you, you became a troublemaker. So,

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you know how big it made you look. Really and truly, you try to, everybody soon, you find once, twice, like this, and you say, "Why should I represent these people. Why should I be doing this thing for them?" You think because you believe in this thing here and you think you're doing right then you find out that these people that you're supposed to be their representing are the ones who're stabbing you in the back. Do you need that?

MN: You were born when the unions were acceptable.

JB: Like you, you, yourself. When you hear of, you go to work for someplace else, a man comes, a representative of the union comes in and he says, "You're going to join the union." You ask him, how much I got to pay and this thing here, you have, he doesn't have to explain to you what a union is, he doesn't have to explain the duties of the union. But when you're starting off you don't know what a union is, you don't know what it's going to do, you don't know how it's going to work, you have rules and regulations, you don't know how to interpret the rules, and you're fighting, really and truly, you're fighting but this is the way it goes. This here is a 19-, this, this book is made up of all the rules of what you could do and what you can't. See, there's, it has a heading of Article II, of management's responsibility.

MN: That must have been made then.

JB: But this is what they are responsible. This is, see. Now over here this says, "Bring in the toxicants." And now I hate to think of it, because they say, now, you bring in

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dope and marijuana and everything else. And before this thing was over, there was a big thing, smoking pot. They used to smoke pot in the shop. I see guys with their little pipes.

MN: Think you could smell it.

JB: No, no. Of course you could smell it. They're not kidding no body. But I say, I'm a, if I owned the man-, if I was the owner of the plant do you think I would like that? It would hurt me terribly to have these people do what they're doing. Over here it says, when this thing was written up, it says, " (unintelligible) the intoxicants." There's still some people (unintelligible). This, this (unintelligible) moral contact. Deliberate destruction of--

MN: Oh, you can fire people for these reasons.

JB: This was the reason, yeah. If you destroyed property. Know like I told you one time, sometimes you're handling a piece of furniture that's 300 lbs., you're not going to take it and jam it and bust the corners off some bureau, or something like that. This is out, you don't do this kind of stuff. Look, that's what you're, giving and taking bribes. And there's all kind of rules that, that, and then like you say, the first offenses they caught you doing something, smoking or something like that, in a restricted area. But they would give you a week off or all kind of rules. These rules are written quite specifically and what you can do and what you can't do, and that's the same kind, over here in the Article III,

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there's the standard legal procedures, that you have to yourself. And then the union has to follow.

MN: And did people follow these rules?

JB: Oh, you better believe that they followed, you had to follow them, because this was your bible that you had to go by, you had no other recourse, you didn't know what you were doing. But if you looked at the book, but then, you would interpret that one way and I interpret it another way.

MN: That's why you needed the arbitrator.

JB: No, how do you do it? When you do this, the arbitration comes in.

MN: And who were these arbitrators?

JB: That's a state, a state man, the union gets one man or they agree on this thing here and the company agrees this one, and then they actually pay this arbitrator to come in. And then they have this, he has the power to receive testimony from you, he has, he receives it from you. And then he makes a judgement. He maybe has to go back two or three times to one another to see which way--

MN: And his judgement is binding.

JB: Oh, his, his, his judgement is --, the arbitrator shall, see, "the arbitrator shall have the power to receive testimony and evidence from the parties in the dispute as outlined in the grievance procedure." And this procedure has to be followed to a "T".

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JB: And when the, the arbitrator rules, that is it. No matter if you're hurt or the company is hurt, they, they have to--

MN: Oh, that's why they say they agree to "binding arbitration."

JB: Yeah, "binding arbitration."

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TAPE THREE, SIDE A (March 21, 1988)

MN: Today is March 21st, 1988, and I'm at the Heritage State Park with Joe Bogdanski. OK, we're rolling. Now the wood comes from where?

JB: The wood comes from Canada. Or Vermont. The maples and the birches. So this is where they come, they load 'em in a boxcar and the boxcar goes over to Heywood-Wakefield siding, that's right next to the Boland Room now. They used to stand beside the railroad track and they'd open up the boxcar, then they would shoot the, the lumber on a rollers down to where the Boland Room is now.

MN: Would it come already, already cut, or was it like--?

JB: No. These were maybe like 12 footers, 14 footers--

MN: Planks.

JB: --big pieces of lumber. They were maybe an inch and an eighth they maybe are, actually, the measurements. And then the people, would be maybe one or two fellas, plus a surveyor, that would take this lumber out of the boxcars and they'd put

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it on a roller and they'd bring it down just to where the Boland Room is now. But this Boland Room used to be where they had the tracks, and you would load the thing, maybe ten feet, or maybe ten, twelve feet high of this lumber that was what you call stacked lumber. Then from there they would push it into the dry kilns then the dry kilns, just a little ways down there, it still goes on the same tracks, those were inside the shop. From the shop, after they stayed there for a period of time, maybe 4 or 5 days--

MN: They're all stacked up?

JB: They're all stacked up, on, on, they have spaces, too, between 'em. Everyone of them is spaced, you don't pile 'em in solid, they, they put the dry, the sticks across and--

MN: And why do they put them in the kiln?

JB: Well, so, if you dry up a piece of wood, this splits. You can't dry a piece of wood that you're just gonna put the heat to it. You find out the wood is chipped and it wouldn't be worth anything. But if you dry it slowly with humidity and you make sure that always this thing is, automatically, that it just keeps drying more, then it gets put in, drying more and more and you find out that that wood does not split or crack. And then, after it stayed there for, the man comes around with a gauge with a humidity check. If it's three or four per cent, I think that's tolerable, that they would let it go into, like you say, the swing, swing saws. And a swing saw is a, this piece of board that the man puts on and he's

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got to cut maybe three feet, maybe some that are four to two feet, little boards, because all these things are cut to a certain, they're going to make bureaus, he's got to big ones and he's got to have side ones and he has all these things, and they always try to pick the best part of the wood, the knots they try to cut out.

MN: Yeah, Does it take a lot of people to unload it from the kilns and--?

JB: No, but they, took maybe one or two, one, two men in the boxcar and the surveyor because he's got to check the footage that comes from the, from the company that cuts the wood. And then from the conveyor, when they unload the, when it comes out of the dry kiln, now this here, the man who's maybe cutting the wood, he will reach up and pull down a plank and then he's got all these different dimensions that he's gonna cut. Once he cuts it, he doesn't lift it, it just falls off on a round table and the round table goes around and there's maybe one or two different people that will sort the sizes out. And then, from there, after it's all ready cut and it's put on the flats, then it goes to the next operation--

MN: What kind of flats?

JB: Flats. Them the flats, they call flats, it's just a piece of, well, how could you say it, maybe four foot, five foot by three feet or something, just a plain piece of thing that a jack could go under and that's the, the jack, a man would bring this whole load and put it beside a planer. Then they say

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well, they got to run it through the planer. So they run it through the planer, that's maybe the next room. So they have these jacks that they, didn't have to become mechanized. They used to have one of these trucks that was electrically and they used to do it quicker. But when--

MN: So it'd go from the swing saw to the planer?

JB: Well, from the swing saw then it's loaded on the flats for, you know, then it's got to be made, maybe some of this stuff has got to be recut. It's a _____(unintelligible) saws that you would say you wanted a piece four inches. Well, four inches. There's be one man pushing this wood and you'd be catching it on the other side and piling it on. From then on maybe some of that stuff went to the stickers. The sticker's the noisiest thing, if a sticker was running where you are now, you could hear that sticker running over here because it comes automatically, it planes, it shapes, and just keeps right on going because a man, he stacks 'em up on a rack and this machines takes over all by itself. But there is maybe three or four different mortars that you would start and each mortar has a different color some, you know, how can I say, like we see them, well, not the spindles, but the, some some of the chairs would maybe have a bevel like that arm over there. See that, how that's beveled. Well, this sticker, this sticker is a big machine, maybe from here to your wall, maybe ten, twelve feet long. and these knives that are, that this,

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that are really spinning, well, this piece of wood comes and it already shapes it and the other one makes another shape and another shape and when it comes in, it's all done. This is what it's called, is a sticker. Now, you haven't left the first floor yet. Then--

MN: MN: What building would this be in?

JB: Right there in this flat iron building. And the other part. Well, the flat iron goes all the way down on Central St. side and downstairs used to what they call a hog. A hog is a, is just an old, you can't never feed it or nothing, used to take all the scrap wood and cut it up into shavings and they'd put it up in the bin right between the two plants now and then it would blow it into the Heywood-Wakefield boiler room. So that's the way it was.

MN: So the hog was the boiler room?

JB: Oh, yeah, the boiler, and they used to burn wood and coal over there. The shavings and the coal used to be mixed and they used to burn it. Then they used to, guy would build up hundred fifty pounds of steam per square inch. Hundred and fifty pounds. So you don't fool around with that, that's real high pressure steam.

MN: Now there were people downstairs that took care of it?

JB: Oh, yeah. there'd be maybe one or two men in the hog.

MN: Would they get paid more for that job?

JB: No, pay, I don't think so.

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JB: Cause that was, anybody could do that. You had to take no knowledge of this, all you had to do was go after the wood because the wood was all ready dropped through the floor that the pieces that were cut out and all you had to do was just clean the boxes, shovel the stuff into the hog the hog would certainly chew it up. It's just like the ones they have on the street. You see the, the people that trim the branches on the trees, how they throw these things in? Well, that's what the hog is. The same thing except it's down in the cellar and it grinds away.

MN: This is all on the first floor. Let's stay on the first floor for another minute. How did they know how many pieces of board to cut ten feet, how many to cut five feet, which ones they should put into the sticker?

JB: Well, this was, there used to be a fella by the name of Pete Sweet who give the orders to the wood shop and they says, "Hey listen, I want so many pieces of say, for the bureaus." Well, they got to make so many bureaus and if you don't make one part of a board or you don't make the big long boards, you can't put the, can't put the bureaus together. So these pieces have to be running the side, the sides are small, the, maybe the triple dressers are long pieces of boards, the door fronts, all these things have to be cut downstairs before you can do anything. All these pieces, that pretty soon there's jigsaw puzzle comes together that some places down in the plant where they would run it through a shaper or the sticker, like

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I told you, that they run these cabinets and the doors, so you have to groove the edge of the boards then they have to put the panels in this way, the ones that were setting them up. So all this thing, remember how I told you that there's a, they beveled the wood? Well now, if you looked at your bureaus, you would see a bevels, how, how they would trim down, and it's a plain piece of board, then it's beveled out and if you looked at the edge of your door frames you would find that on the inside of your door would be a bevel and on top of that a groove on the inside of it, because you'd have to put this piece of veneer inside this groove around the whole thing and when you got it all done, it's find out that all this groove here matches this one, this one, this one. But it already taken four dif-, well, two different sizes of wood. So this is the way it's got, it had to be.

MN: So it had to be very precise.

JB: It had to be precise, there was no, no guess work cause it wouldn't fit.

MN: But somebody from the office upstairs sent down the measurements, or Pete Sweet did.

JB: Oh, well, the measurements, everybody knew, well after a while you, actually would know the size you had to cut, but you would say, I'm trying to think of the number of bureaus--

MN: Yeah, but they made other things besides bureaus.

JB: But that's only, that was only one swing saw.

MN: Oh, so in this particular swing saw they only did cut

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wood for bureaus.

JB: No, as long as, they cut, cut wood for the chairs, they cut wood for the spindles, see, now everything, the recut saws, it cuts a board that's so long, but the recut saws, the _____ (unintelligible) saws they would cut spindles.

Now spindles can't take a big four inch or five inch plank.

It's got to be an inch or maybe half inch or whatever size they want, so this, the recut saw is the one that does this. And then it goes to, like I say, the lathes. There's a back knife lathe, like if you wanted to make a spindle like you got right there, well, that knife is made, well, its ground to fit, to make that thing and this knife comes down, a swing, as he swings down, like a, like a, come down like a, how would you say, like a sythe, an axe, that comes down this way, slowly, and it would make all these notches and all these grooves. And then, that, he just pulls that, pushes the button and the spindle falls down. He don't even touch it. And then another one in its place. And that keeps going.

MN: You know these guys that cutting the wood, did they have any idea in their mind of what this piece of wood would be used for, the end product?

JB: Well, they might and maybe not. All they done is, is they got to cut so many thousand board feet, sometimes maybe they would know. All they know is the sizes, this is what they got to cut and its got to be class stuff. If there's

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knots, well, there's small knots that would maybe be one side, they could maybe turn it over and use it on the other side. But the knot that goes all the way through is, is worthless because you can't have a knot in a nice piece of furniture.

MN: So they'd have to use their judgement on that piece of wood.

JB: They had to use their judgement. And there was alot of--

MN: That was a kind of skilled job, then. To call it and cut it and all that.

JB: Well, you see this wood come by, after day, you see this wood is gonna be the same, day in and day out, five days or six days a week.

MN: And did people do that job for years and years, the same job?

JB: Of course they did.

MN: Do you think they got bored?

JB: Well, sure they got bored, but they have to live, too.

MN: Would people ever change jobs much within the company?

JB: Sure, they'd change. But if a man was a, a good man, well, how can you say it. A good man is a good man no matter where he is, he can do, he can do on a swing saw or on a plane, he can do anything. Or the man in the wood shop, most always, would be able to do any job in the wood shop. There's a, to step up to your own machine is something. That man on a sticker, he has to know something to set up the machine that would do the work that I just told you a little while ago. He, he has

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to be a learned man. The man on the back knife lathe was one of the most dangerous jobs, but he's the man who would be able to stick this thing in and that thing turned so fast, I think it turns 25,000, 27,000 revolutions a minute. So if a blade would ever let go and it ever hits you, there is no hope. One time, well, one of the blades up on the third floor over here, broke, went through the window and hit _____ building. It's just like a shot, you never know. Lot of them, if you see the wood shop where band saws and all the other things are you look at these men, everyone of them has, is missing a finger or two. I know a young man by the name of Amos, he was running a saw, it was jammed up, he, he's pulling out a stick, it hit the saw, that all he had, one finger and a thumb.

MN: Oh he lost, he lost all three middle fingers?

JB: (Speaks softly, unintelligible) and he was a friend, my wife's buddy, my wife's, my wife's girlfriend, that was her husband.

MN: Did the women ever run the saws?

JB: Yeah.

MN: Guess they lost their fingers, too, huh?

JB: Well, I don't know about the women losing their fingers and the press room was the same way, you find any place that comes down, you maybe get careless, there was a lot of safeguards that when a machine is coming down that's automatic, you

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got straps on, and it pulls your fingers away, it pulls your hand away. But sometime even that don't, sometimes it just repeats. That's a, that's a part of the job. Now we got so far, where-?

MN: OK. We got as far as, we got the dry kiln, the swing saw, the plane, now we got to the plane--

JB: The sanding now, the sanding--

MN: On the first floor, the sanding, too?

JB: Oh, that's--

MN: It doesn't really matter.

JB: See, this part, I never been in this part. I been in them parts, but get down to the, I had no need to go in this part.

MN: All right. Well, take me up to the parts that you know.

JB: Well, I know 'em all, but--. Now, we come up on the third floor--

MN: Well, what about the second floor?

JB: The second floor, that's where the sanders are, I think. Well, see, the sanders on the third floor and then it was across the bridge which was the, oh, I talked with Sticks, sticks, with Stanley, I talked with him yesterday. He used to be what they call a yard, a yard man. Not the yard man, yard man, but he was the man with the measurements. He was the man that would have these traced out on a board, the patterns and everything else. Stanley, that would be his, well, Stanley Coleson. That's his name, they used to call him Sticks. Well, I still call him Sticks. But, uh--

MN: Because he used to measure everything, they called him--

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JB: Well, no, he used to have this pattern. See, then you got to remember, you got sample makers. Who you, who you, the men says, this and this and this and this. Which was Teddy and he died. Teddy is, Teddy was one, _____(name) was another one.

MN: What, what was the other one?

JB: _____(name), he's dead. The only other guy that's still living is Eli, but I see him, tell him he's gonna come, but he's the guy that used to be a sample maker. But he's a Finn, but like I say, he's 85 years old now, and he's hard of hearing.

MN: And did you ever hear of a guy named Joe Carr?

JB: Sure, Joe Carr was the artist.

MN: Uh, he wasn't the sample maker?

JB: No. These guys I told you are the sample makers. But then, _____(name) dead, Teddy's dead, he just died. But Joe Carr is a hell of a nice guy.

MN: So, why did you call him Stöcks again?

JB: Stüanley, but he's, he's got two more weeks to work. And then he's going to quit.

MN: Two more weeks to work where?

JB: Well, I don't know where he's working, but he used to work at Heywood's. Because, _____(unintelligible) I was what they call the mirror man, and I used to fix mirrors, I used to put the mirrors in, cut the mirrors, and break mirrors, and do it from. When I got the piece of wood, already painted,

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the next thing that the customer see was all my, the rest of my work was that. I done everything. When they opened up the box, that was there. So these mirror frames, sometimes they push the presses too hard, and when I try to put the glass in, they don't fit, because they just squeeze it up with the machine, and then when you let it down, you put the screws to it, you look at the thing, it's like this. I used to _____ (unintelligible), I used to go see Sticks. "Hey, Stanley, Goddamn things are no good. They screwed up the things."

MN: And what would he do?

JB: Well, then, we'd have to find out why they done this. We'd go down on the third floor and then he would take these things and then he'd check these things and, most of the times, well, sometimes I was wrong. Because my product is all done. I got a piece of glass that somebody else does. I mean, someplace North Carolina. And, well, this part is supposed to fit this part and it don't. Somebody's wrong, you know. So, that's, that's, that's, that's another part.

MN: Well so Stanley was Sticks, and what was the name of his job?

JB: Well, he was a yard, I think they used to call him a yard man. Why he had, the, but that's, now if that was a nickname for him or even true if that was a man who would measure the, the pieces. They had all samples. See, if you wanted the, we had a Swedish designer, Jesus, if you read your Goddamn Shop News, it'd tell you all this.

MN: I'm reading it, but I only got through '36 and '37.

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JB: Well, anyhow, the modern furniture, the Swedish designers come in, well, he gives you these patterns, he tells you all these things. Now Joe Carr comes into the picture, too, if you want to know about Joe Carr. Did Carl tell you about Joe Carr?

MN: We haven't spoken yet, just a brief exchange.

JB: Well, how did you know Joe Carr?

MN: Betsy told me about him.

JB: Joe Carr is a hell of a nice guy.

MN: Well, let's go back to follow our trajectory here. So are we finished with the planers on the first floor--

JB: Oh, then goes to the sanding. Now the sanders, is what you say, they sand. They run through the drum sand, there is a drum sander where you wanted to do a post, or something like this, where they would do it by hand, it's a drum. It's really a drum where it turns and, then there was what you called a belt sander, where if you wanted to, like a chair, the seat of a chair sorted rounded like this and everything else, well, you'd sand the things like this, right? Well, this is all these things. And then if you wanted to scoop out, look at a chair, it's scooped out. This is a machine that this comes down in one operation and it scoops out the seat. When you go home you sit, you look at your seat--

MN: Unintelligible

JB: Yes. That's the machine that does that. But see, somebody has to sand this thing down because if the, if the, if the grinders, well, see now, this is going to be that other man who

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tools, who sharpens the tools. Now if you used a burr on there, you know what that does? That leaves the burr on the wood. See, and if it leaves a burr, if it's a big thing, there you can see it, they'll stop it right off. But sometimes you don't just see it and so this has to be sanded. It has to be sanded fine. There's a rough paper, fine paper.

MN: But there, right now they're just sanding planks of wood, they're not sanding finished chairs.

MN: Well, now you've got, you already gone into the, they've already been through the recut saws, their cut up to the certain, well, whatever they're gonna make, if they're gonna make chairs, you got to have skinny pieces, so on, you got to have that seat, that's got to be scooped out and you got the legs that're gonna be turned like like I told you with a back knife blade. Now, we're just sorta talking about chairs.. So you got a back knife lathe that will form the spindles. You have a, yeah, the back knives, and then you have, well the back blades was the blades run the opposite, this way. And that's the kind of pieces they would do right there. And then the chuck, let's see, there's a chuck that if you look at, when you go home you examine your chair and you'll find out that the end pieces are chucked. You look at your chairs.

MN: That means made a notch?

JB: No. That means that this is a kind of a round piece of

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MN: Oh, and they do that so the spindles stay securely--

JB: When the hole is a little bit smaller than the, than the little bit the hole, is equivalent to the size that you put, _____(unintelligible). Then like you say, there's the scooper that scoops the seat. You see, now, when they're all done, they used to do it all on the first floor in the corner. But--

MN: And isn't there an assembly, I mean, when do they--?

JB: That's, oh, you got to do a lot more work to it now, see, OK, we got the spindles cut, we got the seat scooped out, right? All right, the scooped seats are on one flat, the spindles are on another flat, --

MN: The flats the conveyor belt? What's a flat, again?

JB: A flat is a piece of, how can you say it, piece of like you say, if you cut out the piece over here and it's a flat piece of wood and they got places where a truck can go and that and pick it up. and bring it to the other guy. So now you bring it up to, well it's on the other side. And so now, here comes the assembly. The man takes the seat that's already all done, he takes the spindles, glue, glue, glue, sticks 'em in. Then he takes the arm, the top part, then he matches this, the side.

MN: And it's already bent.

JB: Well, some of them are bent, yeah, Some of them are bent, like a 205, see, 1205, _____(unintelligible) I can remember that, that the seat, you got to remember, I

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haven't _____(unintelligible) why I bet you, I don't know, I've been gone 18, 20 years.

MN: And then when did, OK, so this guy puts the seat together, I mean the whole chair together? Or he just puts the spindles in and somebody else --

JB: No he assembles the chair.

MN: That one guy assembles the whole chair?

JB: One chair, yeah, he assembles that thing. And there'll be one guy up in the, _____(unintelligible) would be assembling the bureaus, all the case work, they would call it case stuff. And this would be done, there was a roll of conveyor where you put the thing, once you got it done, you roll it on the conveyor and it would go to, to, like you say, well, they would drill the holes and do all the other things and somebody else'd be making the drawers, bottoms, and the sides and they make all these things and they match em all together when it gets up to the trim area, that's when it's almost ready to go to the paint shop.

MN: Oh, all right. And what would they do when they trim?

JB: Well, this is where you trim. The trim room would be, now it's already painted, this is Pete Sweet's job, Pete Sweet's the boss. That's the guy I told you, well, see, I was trying to get you all these people who were, his name's S_____, S_____, Swede.

MN: Is that his real name, Swede?

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JB: Well, everyone was called Swede, but his real name was Bill, William S_____. Bill. I'll tell you, you know where McDonald's is? Right across the street, there's a white house there.

MN: And what's his real name, they called him Pete Swede but his real name--

JB: Let's see, I got, no, no, P_____Swede. Pete Swede is another guy. Pete Swede worked in the office. That's another buddy of ours.

MN: What's he called, Frank Swede?

JB: Frank, Frank, yeah, Frank. Frank was in the trimming room. That's in the trim room.

MN: And so what happens in the trimming room?

JB: Now this is the ones that would bore holes into the bureaus, these are the ones that would put the hardware on. These, well, that's it. But this is, this is what you call the trimming room, with the drawer don't fit just right, if you look and you see these drawers are, well, one drawers here and one drawers over here, some, you fix it so you _____(unintelligible). You find a drawer, you find a door that's, you try to shut it and thing is like this, you fix it. That's the trim room.

MN: Oh, so they made all the adjustments on the furniture.

JB: Yeah, but this is already done, this is already come from the paint shop to go there.

MN: It's already painted?

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JB: Huh? It's already painted when it goes down to the trim room.

MN: So the paint, after it goes to the paint shop, they paint it.

JB: Yeah, oh Christ, they stain it, they tone it and they wipe it, they laquer it, they dry it.

MN: And where's the conveyor belt in all this--

JB: Well, all that's done is on a conveyor. You don't even touch it.

MN: Even the assembly guy?

JB: Oh, no, no, no. No, assembly. Assembly's would be up here when they had hooks. But, Jesus Christ, that conveyor belt, if you read that Shop News, it's there. I'm sure it's there. I was working in the office when the conveyor came in.

MN: And do you know when that was? Was it before World War II?

JB: Uh, I don't know. I really don't know. Yeah, it had to be.. We bought, not we, Heywood-Wakefield bought _____
_____ (unintelligible) comes in.

MN: Oh, cause they had to expand to get a whole other department.

JB: Then comes _____(unintelligible)

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JB: Had these wooden truck bodies that goes on a truck. Not the chassis, they never made no chassis, it was the, the wood. It was made out of wood, it was made on the Pine St. side, that whole back part of it was all, and that was conveyor, too. And when it was all done they loaded it up in the boxcars, on a flat, so out it goes, the boxcars are right there. They had quite a crew at that.

MN: Oh, and that would be in the shipping department.

JB: That would be, well, once that used to be the shipping room, but when they came in with the cargo bays, that's where they used to paint them and everything else. And, but then there used to be bomb fuses, that's during the war, they made the fuses.

MN: Did they make any furniture?

JB: Yeah, they made some furniture. Not as much as they'd been. But when they're running, when they're running furniture. Running real good, they could, really and truly, ship out about a thousand pieces a day. That's, that's one heck of a lot of furniture that could go. That was the conveyor. The conveyor used to, well, when, when it was real good, over a thousand pieces a day. But you maybe, eleven, eleven, twelve packers, or on the thing, you had maybe sixty, seventy people on the paint shop conveyor.

MN: And they each paint one separate part of the--?

JB: Oh? yeah, the, the first thing that came through on the, now this is a light piece of, it could be a chair, or it could be a bureau, or it could be a corner cabinet, well, anything.

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But that's always received a stain. And then if you wanted, they, they put a toner on it or there would be this thing. But everytime this, the conveyor would go so fast and it would take so long and the, give these people a chance to wipe 'em. The wipers, maybe about 10, twelve people, wiping, wiping these things. The shipping room conveyor used to go twenty, twenty two feet a minute.

MN: Oh, and the paint shop one went slower?

JB: That's a good question, I, yes, it was slower.

MN: And they'd wipe the lacquer off, or whatever?

JB: Well, not the lacquer, but they took the stain, when the stain becomes a muddy looking thing, so you got to, you got so much time for the wood to absorb the stain, because if you don't wipe it clean, there'll be a stain, a piece of wood that's maybe of some _____(unintelligible) wood, so then you have to wipe the stain right off. The chairs were the same way.

MN: And they would do that over and over during the day?

JB: That's all you done. Wipe stain. And then the next one would be maybe the sealer, well, maybe the sealer was first, whatever it was, but this is the, this is the procedure. And then the last coat would be the lacquer. And then it'd go, well, I think that paint shop conveyor was a mile long. It'd go back and forth, you know. And see, when something would go wrong and you had to shut that conveyor off, in the ovens, well

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you know, the heat in some parts of it was warmer, or hotter than any other part. So if you had this lacquer, everything all done, well, common sense tells you that it wouldn't be as nice as the other one. So you couldn't, really and truly stop this conveyor. And if you did stop the conveyor you were making, well, maybe should we say, a hundred, hundred and fifty people that are not doing anything.

MN: But nobody ever stopped it, did they?

JB: Well, it jams, jams stop it, because you wreck more furniture than it's worth. Because these, these pieces of furniture maybe is worth three, four hundred dollars.

But you don't want to jam up some piece of furniture because, well, truly, and truly, the conveyor would run quite steady. Steady all the eight hours or nine hours or whatever it runs.

MN: I guess if I were a worker, I'd be scared to tell anybody I stopped it.

JB: Well, no, they everybody understands, the shipping room conveyor, no this is stuff that's already going to come, going to a customer. Now you just think about all this. There is, there was a tray and three hooks, There was a tray, a tray that would take a bureau, a triple dresser, a triple dresser's quite a long piece of furniture. Well that tray would take this bureau, the long way, and then there'd be three hooks, the three hooks would take the chairs, night stands, anything that would be able to hang, but sometimes, the, so it's coming

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down the, down, well, the shipping room conveyor would be on the second floor and it'd come down to the first floor and then it'd just go back upstairs and just keep right on going and the furniture 'd be coming down and that's the way it was. But, it's coming down the chute because you're coming down two stories, the string breaks, what you going to do with it? Maybe there's nobody there. So when the tray's coming down, what d'ya think? It'd dump. You dump this furniture out. It falls off the thing and you make, really and truly, a jam. So there is a safety device on there with the shear pins that would, pins that, these two gears would mesh and right here, the shear pins were here and the shear pins would stop, I mean would brake, and that would stop the machine. The motors are still running but the thing is not going anywhere. And so then, you'd have to stop it when you came to the switch box over there, you stop it and then you put the pins in and start it all over again. That used to be my job, I did that, too.

MN: Oh, you did that, too?

JB: Yeah, yeah.

MN: So whenever it jammed you would have to stop it and then put the pins in?

JB: Oh, it jammed, jammed, then you start going, like today is a windy day and if the wind is blowing right sometimes the doors in the wind, the doors opened this way, but when the thing is like this. So they, the wind is strong, and

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and the things pull, if they fall down, you got a jam that's, you have to stop. Because you don't want to see the furniture really and truly jammed up or busted. You don't want that.

MN: And what was the guy, remember you were telling me about the time man, John Masowitz, and others?

JB: Oh, John, like you said, when establish the piece work rate, you got the have a timer. He tells, I think the company tells you or the cost man find out how much it would cost to produce this thing here. From the beginning, they take the wood and everything else into consideration, and they start with some sort of a price before the man goes out to time how long it should take a person to do it, really and truly, that's all there was. So they would give you a price for your, your part of the job. If you were to assemble that chair, they, they had some price ahead and this is the price should, they should be able to pay. Now, if you wasn't satisfied or they weren't satisfied, well, you had a grievance procedure when you was in the union. Cause then you would say your part and was the other part.

MN: But what do you mean, so give me an example then, supposing they say to someone that they should assemble ten chairs an hour , or something?

JB: Well, when you work piece work, you've got a piece of chair, you've got a certain amount of money, you've got to do so many chairs, bureaus or anything to make, shall we say, your money, or whatever the rate is If you can't make this

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rate, then you don't lag or you don't monkey around, well, maybe you have got, really and truly a grievance. So this is why the grievance procedure is there.

MN: And if you did more than expected, then you got paid more?

JB: Well, each piece carried a price. If you, if you felt that you wanted to, well, this goes back quite a few years, if you wanted a dollar, or two dollars, or three dollars and hour, you try to do these things and if you fifty cents more, well, you got fifty cents more. So that's all there was to it.

MN: So the time guy, was he the only one around in the beginning to decide how long it should take to do it?

JB: Like a press, a press, they don't time the man, they time the press. But if a man works with his hands, or some men are slow, or some, some remarkable how they they can work, they can work eight or nine hours there, it's remarkable. No wonder everybody was dying off.

MN: Yeah, I was thinking that's true. Did he have to have any special training to be a timer? I mean, how did he know how much it should cost or how long it should take?

JB: Well, now you, you have a stop watch, like, like the man who runs, if he's in track, he starts at the beginning, he pushes the timer and he tells you how fast you ran. The hundred yard, the two hundred, the quarter mile, whatever he done. Well the timer comes over here, he starts to walk and then that's the time he takes his seat, he takes

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the spindles, he takes the arms, he takes the back, he takes the legs, all these things and he starts working it. When you finish the chair, the timer stops the stimer. And this is the price that they're basing on the time element. They give him so much time to bring in his load, they have people who deliver these flats or seats or spindles, or whatever it is, they have these men to do that. They bring in, these men are day work. But these people who do this are piece work.

MN: And who would be piece work, and how can you tell somebody's piece work and--

JB: Well, everybody's piece work. The day workers never got no money. They were the lowest, because you have no set, if you're a day worker, or say like a day worker, he sweeps the floor, OK, he's a day worker. He pushes a truck to you, that's a day worker. _____(unintelligible) he brings you something else, that's a day worker. He gets a standard price and this is it. But the man who makes an effort to get more for his pay, he's the man who's called piece worker. Well, he's piece work. Because you get so much money for each piece. Simple as that. Piece work, piece, each piece.

MN: Even the people on the conveyor belt that did the painting, they were piece work, too?

JB: That was what you call a group incentive plan. That's a different kind of a story. You have all these, what they used to have a red(??) rate, well, if you produced more furniture that came through the line, well, you had a little

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different rate.

MN: Oh, so they'd be trying to encourage their neighbor to keep up--

JB: Well, you have to, when you work in a group and the, like you say, we'll stick to paint shop, they're wiping stain, you got these people so the next piece that comes by maybe two or three people grab this thing to wipe it so the streaks wouldn't be there. But there's, another piece is coming, two, two, if it's a fair chair, maybe only one person takes it, and they, they, they wipe it. But if it's a bigger piece maybe two, two people, most of them were women. Some, sometimes they were men.

MN: In the paint shop, mostly were women?

JB: Yeah, but that woman that you talked to, well, she says, well I sprayed paint too, and I wiped stain. Didn't she say that? So these people are capable of doing anything. Well, you learn, you can observe and you can see how this other person is doing it so that's the same story.

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